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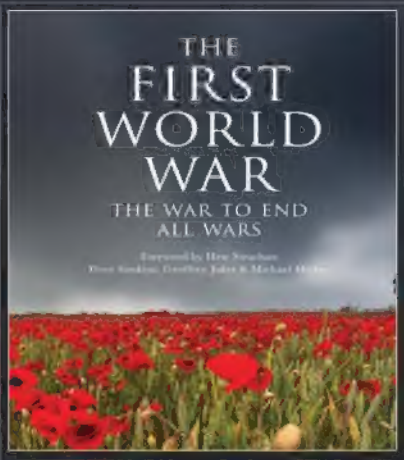


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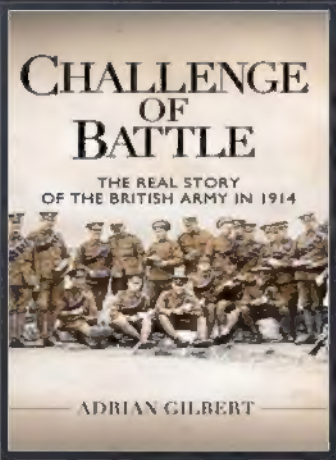


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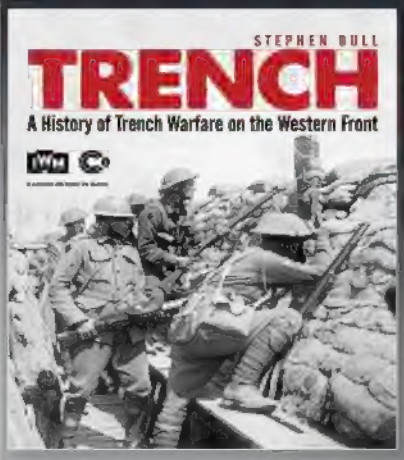


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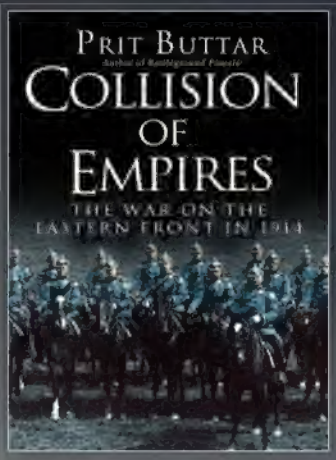


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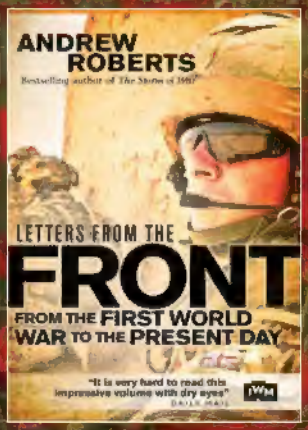


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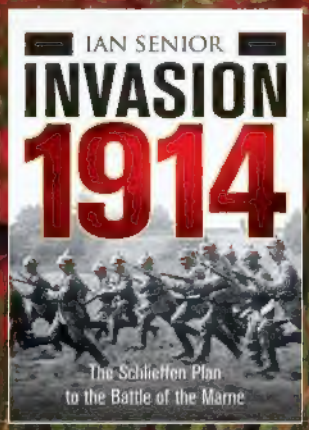


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# HISTORY of WAR

# Welcome

Next month marks the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings: the Allied assault on the beaches of Normandy that initiated the liberation of France and the beginning of the end of the European aspect of World War Two. It was one of the largest military exercises in modern history, with more than 150,000 troops from numerous nations landing either amphibiously or from the skies on French soil.

The loss of life on both sides – Allied and German – was high. There were an estimated 10,000 Allied casualties, including around 2,500 dead. The number of Germans either killed or wounded is vague, but as many as 9,000 could have been injured or lost their lives, making those 50 miles of Normandy coastline a desperate, bloodied stretch. In this, issue four of *History Of War*, we dedicate our lead feature to examining what happened on that fateful day in June 1944.

**Paul Pettengale** *Editorial Director*
paul.pettengale@anthem-publishing.com

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## Contributors

**DR DUNCAN ANDERSON**
Dr Anderson is Head of the Department of War Studies at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, and also Senior Research Fellow at De Montfort University. A prolific author, he penned this month's cover feature on the D-Day landings (page 18).

**ANDREW ROBERTS**
Andrew is a British historian and author whose writing career started in 1991. His 2009 book *The Storm Of War* hit the number-two slot on *The Sunday Times'* bestseller list. In this issue, we print an extract from his latest tome, *Letters From The Front* (page 69).

**NICK SOLDINGER**
Nick is a journalist with 20 years' experience. His job has allowed him a seat on the front row of history on a number of occasions, including in Iraq in 2007 and Afghanistan a year later. This issue, he explores the 1314 Battle of Bannockburn (page 76).

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Allied troops descend from amphibious craft during the D-Day landings of 6 June 1944

TopFoto

## ON THE COVER

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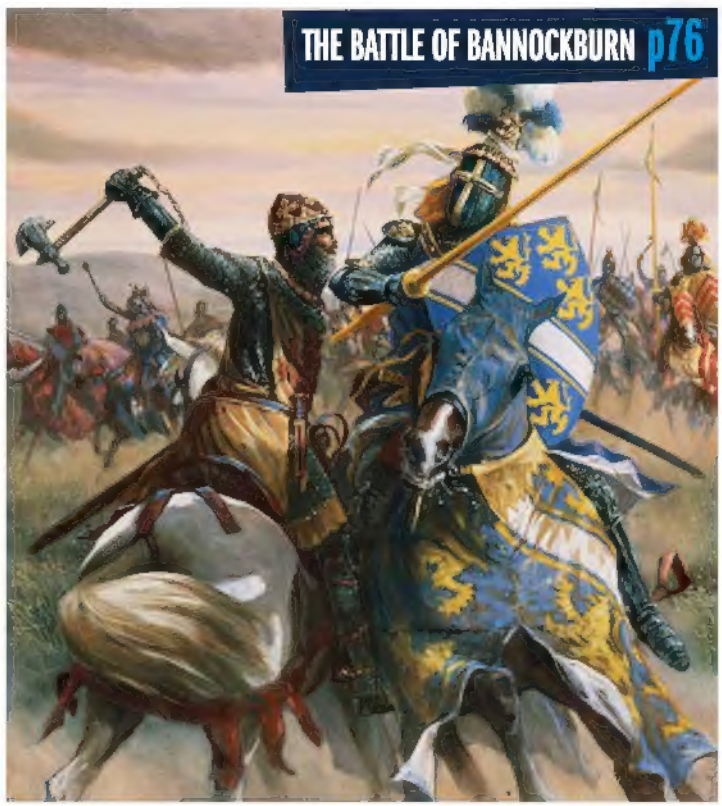

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# HISTORY of WAR

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Mary Evans

## WAR in FOCUS

### PATROLLING THE SWAMPS

*Taken* **1961**

There's a certain serenity about this photograph, as Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) soldiers patrol the Mekong Delta in search of Viet Cong guerrillas. But the reality was very different, and the Delta saw some of the most vicious clashes of the Vietnam War. The guerrillas would often hide underwater – breathing through a reed – before pouncing on their unsuspecting victims.

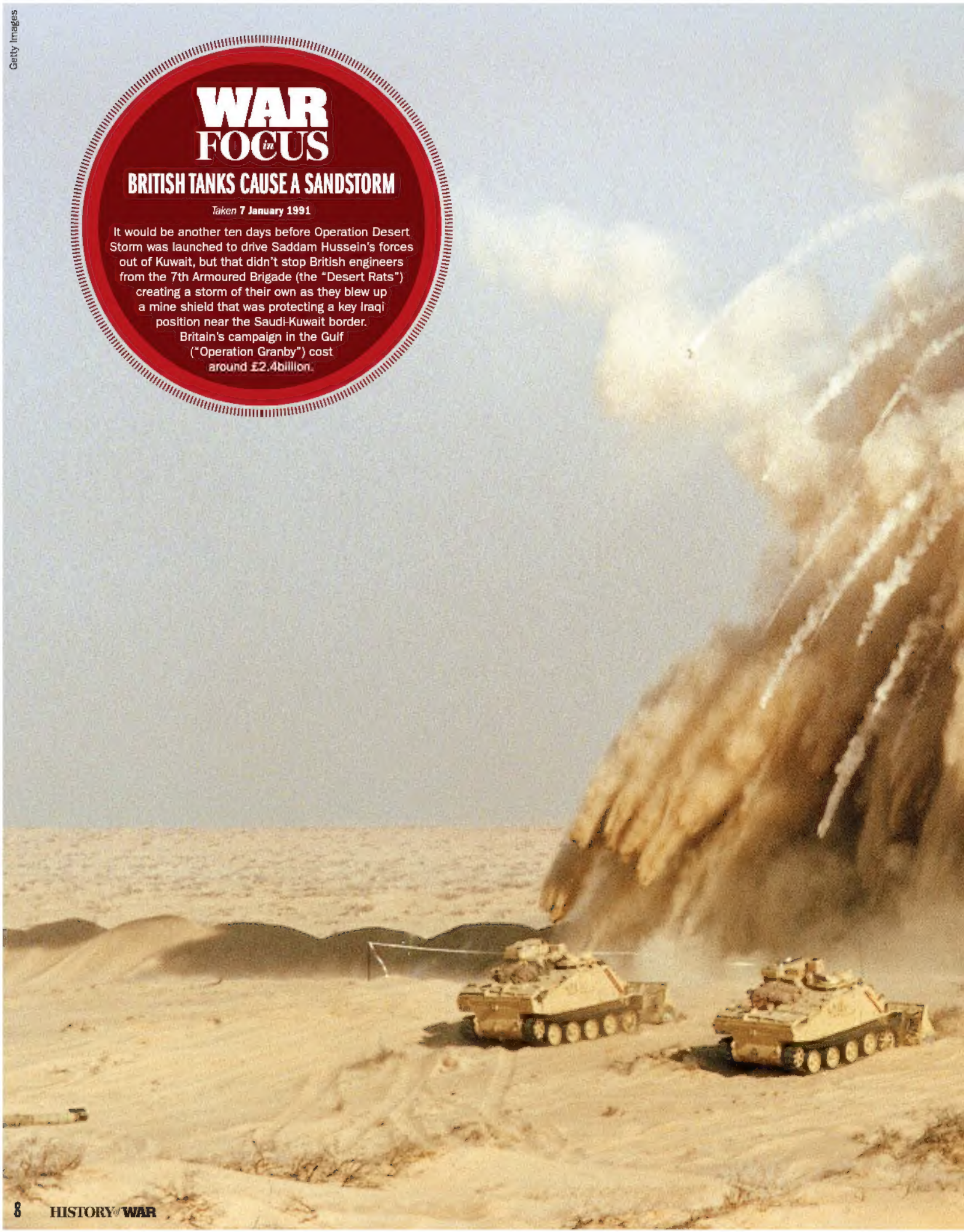
Getty Images

# WAR FOCUS in

## BRITISH TANKS CAUSE A SANDSTORM

*Taken* **7 January 1991**

It would be another ten days before Operation Desert Storm was launched to drive Saddam Hussein's forces out of Kuwait, but that didn't stop British engineers from the 7th Armoured Brigade (the "Desert Rats") creating a storm of their own as they blew up a mine shield that was protecting a key Iraqi position near the Saudi-Kuwait border. Britain's campaign in the Gulf ("Operation Granby") cost around £2.4billion.



## WAR in FOCUS

### HANDS OUT FOR HITLER

*Taken* 6 October 1935

No, it's not Beatlemania. Neither is it Elvis fans waiting to get a glimpse of their idol. No, these smiling men and women were among the million or so people who turned out to welcome Adolf Hitler and his Nazis to Bückeberg for the party's annual Harvest Festival. However, everything may not have been as it seems: it's widely believed that this photo was ordered by the Nazis as a propaganda device.

# DISPATCHES

Military news and opinion from around the globe, including a couple's surprising find during building work, the latest inhabitants of a Nazi tunnel system, and WWI mementos unearthed

## LAST BRITISH WWII SUB REOPENS ITS HATCHES

HMS Alliance, the only surviving British Second World War-era submarine, has undergone extensive restoration over the past year, and has now reopened its hatches to history fans.

The 281-foot submarine, based at the Royal Navy Submarine Museum in Gosport, Hampshire, has been restored as part of a £7million project, and will tell the story of life underwater from WWII through the Cold War to the 1970s, using authentic sights, sounds and smells.

Former submariners will head the guided tours, recounting tales of their time in the Navy, as Chris Munns, Director of the museum, explains: "A visit on board HMS Alliance will assault all the senses and really bring to life what it's like to work and live on a submarine."

HMS Alliance was designed during the Second World War for service in the Far East, and throughout her 28-year career she held the world record for the longest dive by a submarine, staying immersed for 30 days. She also served during the Cold War before being retired in 1973.

For tickets and further information, visit www.nmrn.org.uk.

## Woman discovers grandfather's WWI medal on eBay

They say you can find some real gems online, but it's not every day that you come across a deceased relative's medal that you never even knew existed. That's exactly what happened to Hilary Tipping, who discovered her grandfather George Matthew Cox's First World War medal – a 1914-15 Star – on auction site eBay last month.

Cox was a boilermaker on the HMS Tara when, in November 1915, the ship was torpedoed by a German U-boat and sank. He survived the attack but was taken prisoner in North Africa, where he became ill and died two months later. It's believed that he was buried in the Libyan desert.

Says Tipping, "I didn't even know the medal existed. We knew my grandfather went down on the Tara but to hold the medal in my hand was unbelievable. He would never have seen the medal, which makes it sadder still."

The Star was being auctioned by a seller in Exeter. History enthusiast Geraint Seaborn Griffith from Holyhead in Wales purchased it, giving Tipping – who also lives in Holyhead – the chance to have a look at it. "I'm glad that someone from around here has the medal," she enthuses. A Victory Medal and British War Medal also awarded to Cox remain missing.

# CHALKE VALLEY FESTIVAL SET TO BRING MILITARY HISTORY TO LIFE

## Unique seven-day event promises plenty of interactive entertainment

If you're a fan of all things historical and fancy a change from the usual museums, make a note in your diary to attend the Chalke Valley History Festival, which runs from 23-29 June in Salisbury, Wiltshire.

Established in 2011 by two history enthusiasts/writers who wanted to combine literature with living-history displays, it's the largest festival dedicated purely to history in the UK. This year's programme offers a unique blend of talks, discussions and debates, alongside a vast living-history-through-the-ages encampment, which will encompass everything from the Romans to the Second World War. The festival will also include a stunning air show, featuring Spitfires, Hurricanes, a P-61 Mustang, a B-17 Flying Fortress and more.

Elsewhere, there will be a sword school, archery, a First World War trench experience, jousts and re-enactments. The festival will also play host to some of

Britain's leading historians, including Dan Snow, and there will even be the chance to meet Battle of Britain pilot Geoffrey Wellum.

A perfect event for the whole family, the Chalke Valley History Festival will provide a fantastic opportunity to immerse yourself in various bygone eras, and see for yourself how people used to live and fight.

For tickets and further information, pay a visit to www.cvhf.org.uk.

# BATS TAKE OVER NAZI DEFENCE LINE IN WESTERN POLAND

## TENS OF THOUSANDS OF THE CREATURES TAKE UP RESIDENCE IN UNDERGROUND TUNNELS

Those of you with an aversion to bats may wish to stay away from western Poland and its Nazi defence line, which is now home to around 37,000 of the flying mammals.

Adolf Hitler had the 60km defence line installed on the eve of the Second World War in what was then German territory, to protect the Third Reich from attack by Poland or the Soviets. However, today the tunnels of the Ostwall fortification near the town of Miedzyrzecz double as a tourist site – and a huge bat reserve. Jan Cichocki, zoologist at the nearby University of Zielona Gora, explains, "Europe's largest bat hibernation site is in a Romanian cave. But we have the largest man-made one. The bats have it really good here; they have nothing to fear."

The huge defence line features more than a hundred bunkers connected by tunnels hidden up to 40 metres underground – a perfect space for bats due to the constant temperature and humidity. The Ostwall fortification's awe-inspiring size and attention to troop comfort has attracted ever-increasing numbers of visitors over the years, but measures are now being taken to ensure the safety and privacy of the bats

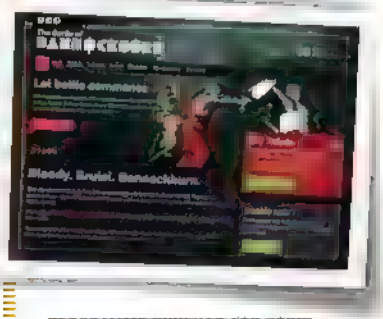
# News in Brief

### SECOND WORLD WAR BOMB KILLS SEVEN IN BANGKOK

Seven workers at a scrapyard in Bangkok were killed after they accidentally detonated a bomb dropped during the Second World War. The blast destroyed the scrapyard and damaged nearby houses. Just a few days before, another bomb had been found but safely handed over to explosives experts. Thailand was heavily bombed by British and US forces during the Second World War.

### WAR-MEMORIAL VANDALS TO RECEIVE TOUGHER SENTENCES

Those who damage or steal from war memorials are set to receive harsher sentences under new laws proposed by the Sentencing Council. The War Memorials Trust has estimated that one monument a week is targeted by metal thieves, who strip plaques to be melted down. Conservative MP Sir Richard Ottoway said, "It really does have a profound effect on people in the local area."



### PROGRAMME UNVEILED FOR 700TH ANNIVERSARY OF BANNOCKBURN

To commemorate the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn – where Robert the Bruce's Scottish forces defeated Edward II's English army (see our feature on page 76) – a "colourful event" is being organised near the scene of the clash in Stirling, Scotland. On 28 and 29 June, more than 300 warriors from the Clanranald Trust will entertain up to 20,000 visitors, alongside a host of big names in Scottish music, including Treacherous Orchestra. For more information and tickets, visit www.battleofbannockburn.com.

### KOREAN WAR SOLDIERS' REMAINS FINALLY RETURN HOME 60 YEARS ON

The remains of 437 Chinese soldiers killed in the Korean War have been returned home more than 60 years after an armistice officially ended fighting in the country. Qin Furong, whose father died in the 1950-53 conflict, said, "We relatives feel gratitude that [the Koreans] could return the bodies to our country." In the war, China fought alongside North Korea against UN forces.

# BRITISH SOLDIER'S MEMORABILIA IS UNVEILED AFTER BEING KEPT IN A LOFT FOR 98 YEARS

POIGNANT MEMENTOS UNCOVERED AFTER NEARLY A CENTURY

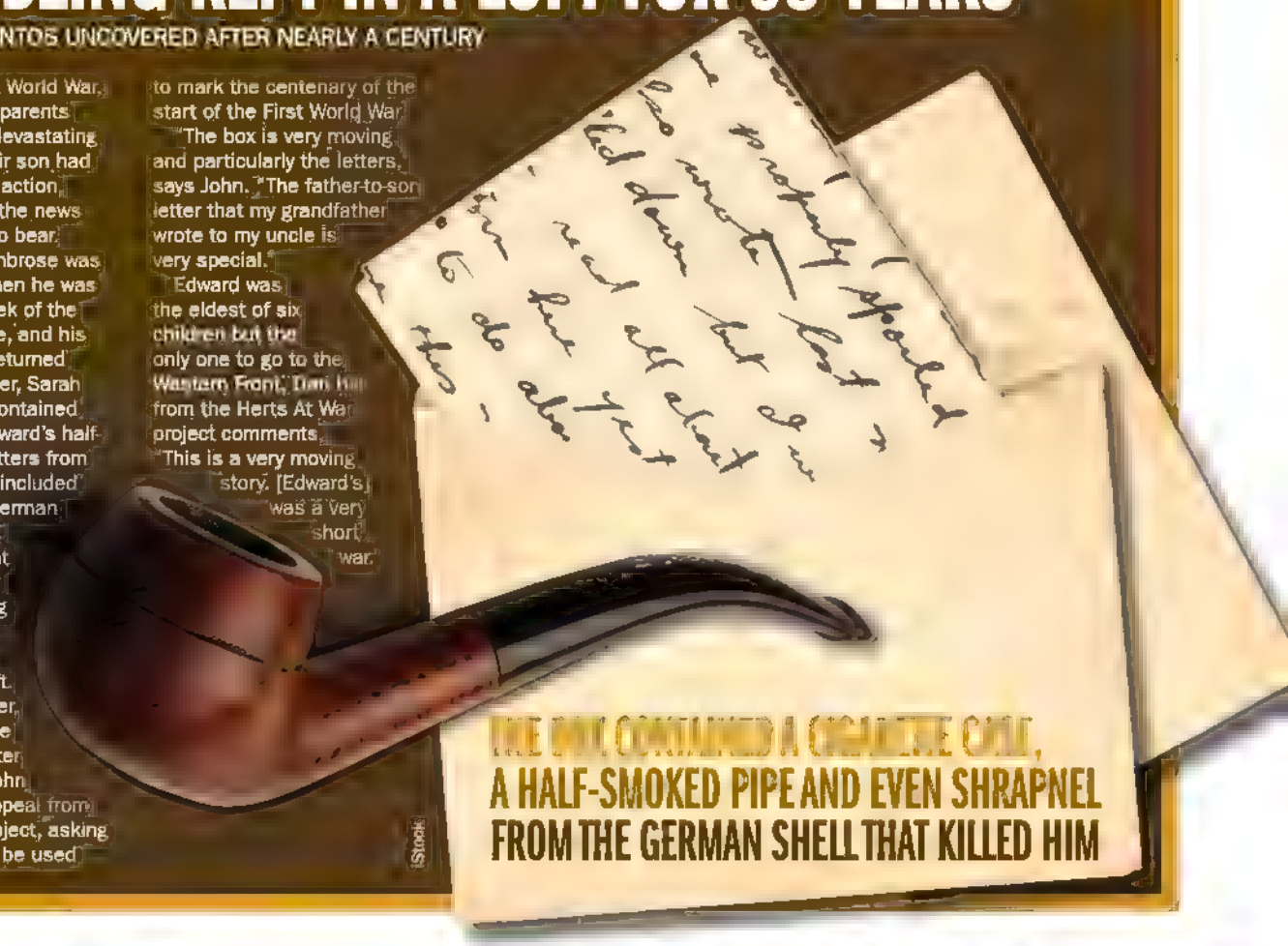
During the First World War, thousands of parents received the devastating news that their son had been killed in action, and for one mother the news was just too much to bear.

Private Edward Ambrose was just 18 years old when he was killed in the first week of the Battle of the Somme, and his possessions were returned in a box to his mother, Sarah Ambrose. The box contained a cigarette case, Edward's half-smoked pipe and letters from his parents. It even included shrapnel from the German shell that killed him. Sarah did not look at the possessions for long before wrapping them in a leather case and packing them away in her loft.

Now, 98 years later, the box has seen the light of day again after Edward's nephew, John Ambrose, saw an appeal from the Herts At War project, asking for items that could be used to mark the centenary of the start of the First World War.

"The box is very moving and particularly the letters," says John. "The father-to-son letter that my grandfather wrote to my uncle is very special."

Edward was the eldest of six children but the only one to go to the Western Front, Dan Hill from the Herts At War project comments. "This is a very moving story. [Edward's] was a very short war."



THE BOX CONTAINED A CIGARETTE CASE, A HALF-SMOKED PIPE AND EVEN SHRAPNEL FROM THE GERMAN SHELL THAT KILLED HIM

# RUINED-TOWN SCULPTURES SET TO GO ON DISPLAY AT ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

In this, the centenary year of the outbreak of the First World War, the world's attention will be on the conflict that brought devastation and ruin.

However, British artist Gerry Judah believes that we should also focus on modern conflicts, saying, "Given that there are going to be many memorials to the First World War, it's not just about remembering; it's also about realising that the conflicts being fought now are knock-ons from that war."

To emphasise his point, he's created two crosses featuring models of destroyed modern towns, which are on display in London's St Paul's Cathedral. The 20ft sculptures, inspired by conflicts such Iraq and Syria, greet visitors as they enter the building.

Growing up in Bengal, Judah was surrounded by the dramatic landscapes of India, which had a profound effect on his developing psyche. He has also created pieces for the BBC, the Imperial War Museum and performers such as Michael Jackson.

Speaking of this most recent commission, he says, "It's a great honour to create these two new works as part of the First World War commemorations." The models will remain in the cathedral for eight months.

# Bones of Napoleon's army found in private garden

When Paul and Nicola Walling began work on an extension to their home in Fareham, Hampshire, little did they expect to unearth the bones of French prisoners of war from the Napoleonic era.

While preparing the foundations, the couple's builder dug up around 40 bones that were originally thought to be animal remains. However, when larger pieces, plus part of a jaw with three teeth, turned up, the builder suspected the worst and the police were called in.

For a while, the Wallings thought they had been caught up in some grisly crime; however, when the forensic officer was unable to date the bones, they were sent to Southampton University to be examined by archaeologists. It's here that they were found to be the partial remains of at least two POWs.

From the 1770s to the 1850s, captured French soldiers were sent to England to be detained in prisons or kept on board ships. The Wallings' home is situated near Portchester Castle, which held some 7,000 French soldiers during the Napoleonic Wars because the existing prisons were full.

The house also lies just 100 yards from a prison hospital used during the conflict.

The Wallings have agreed to let archaeologists rebury the bones on their property.

# NEW WWII MUSEUM IN BELGIUM HONOURS AMERICAN SOLDIERS

## Battle of the Bulge provides the main focus of stunning new facility in Bastogne

To mark the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, a brand-new museum has opened in the town of Bastogne in southern Belgium.

Unveiled in March, the Bastogne War Museum aims to educate people on life during the conflict, with a particular focus on the Battle of the Bulge, which was fought in the area in 1944-45. The museum stands alongside the Mardasson Memorial, which honours the 76,890 US soldiers who were wounded or killed during the battle.

American troops near Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge

Mary Evans

The new facility tells the story of how Belgium was brought into the Second World War, guiding visitors through three distinct phases: the pre-war years; the period between the German invasion of the country in May 1940 and its liberation in 1944; and, finally, the period from December 1944 until the end of the war in 1945. Particularly notable are the 3D multi-sensory exhibits, which provide a sense of what it must have been like to get caught up in the war. The two exhibits include a life-size forest scene, where visitors sit on tree stumps to experience fighting alongside soldiers. In addition to these, there are numerous first-person accounts from both soldiers and Bastogne residents, as well as archive footage.

The museum sheds new light on how the war was fought on the Western Front, and doffs its cap to the courage of the US soldiers who helped to liberate Belgium. Says Benoit Lutgen, Mayor of Bastogne, "The museum thanks American soldiers and the American people."

For more information, visit www.bastognewarmuseum.be.

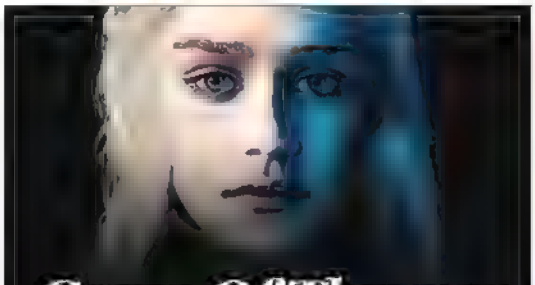
# 300-YEAR-OLD TAPESTRY OF CHURCHILL UNDERGOES RESTORATION

**A 300-year-old tapestry of Sir Winston Churchill's most famous ancestor has undergone major work to restore it to its former glory. The embroidery – the *Bouchain III* – depicts John Churchill, the First Duke of Marlborough, accepting the surrender of French forces during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), in which he led an Allied force to victory in Europe – much like Sir Winston Churchill did many years later.**

**To mark his achievement, the Duke commissioned the design of ten tapestries – 25ft wide by 15ft tall, and made of silk and wool – the most significant of which is the *Bouchain III*. The restoration, which cost £60,000, saw the tapestry being sent to a team of experts in Brussels – the city where it was made – to undergo an intricate cleaning process.**

**Kate Ballenger, House Manager at the Churchills' ancestral home of Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, where the tapestries are on display, says, "These are an extraordinary record of a military victory that had a crucial effect both on Europe and the rest of the world, as well as stunning works of art."**

**The tapestries were made between 1709 and 1717, and are the most accurate records of Churchill's campaign during that war. Plans are in place to clean all ten of them, at a cost of more than £500,000.**



# *Game Of Thrones* inspired by facts

They say that truth is more interesting than fiction – which is probably why popular TV series *Game Of Thrones* took its inspiration from real-life events. George R. R. Martin, the author of book series *A Song Of Ice And Fire*, on which the show is based, has admitted that he drew inspiration from certain historical events, including the English Wars of the Roses.

Kelly DeVries, a medieval historian at Loyola University in Maryland, United States, concurs that Martin captured many medieval realities in his books. "The arms and armour are very well-respected [by Martin]," he explains. "Typically, modern filmmakers go for flashy beheadings and limb-amputation [when, in reality, the armour did a good job of protecting against the weapons of the time]."

Martin has also received praise for his accurate depiction of violence during the Middle Ages, when homicide rates per capita were high and public executions were common. However, not quite so accurate is his take on the dark arts, with Carl Pyrdum III of Yale University pointing out that magic in the Middle Ages was actually "really kind of boring".

# *Events*

**▶ 2-8 JUNE**
***D-Day Experience***
**Major event featuring vehicles, re-enactors, traders and more.**
**Southsea Common, Hampshire.**
***www.ddaysouthsea.solentoverlord.co.uk***

**▶ 3-9 JUNE**
***D-Day Celebrations***
**Six days of commemorative events, including parades, concerts, exhibitions and re-enactments.**
**Portsmouth Town Centre.**
***www.visitportsmouth.co.uk***

**▶ 7 JUNE**
***Jeep Gathering Normandy 2014***
**Whether you own a military vehicle or just want to look at other people's, there's no place more appropriate to do it than the heart of Normandy.**
**Normandy Tank Museum, Catz, Normandy, France.**
***www.normandy-tank-museum.fr***

**▶ 13-15 JUNE**
***Wicksteed At War***
**Family event featuring military vehicles and re-enactors.**
**Wicksteed Park, Kettering.**
***www.wicksteedatwar.co.uk***

## AND DON'T FORGET THESE EVENTS LATER IN THE YEAR...

**▶ 16-20 JULY**
***The War And Peace Revival***
**RAF Westenhanger, Folkestone Racecourse, Kent.** ***01304 813337; www.thewarandpeacerevival.co.uk***

**▶ 1-3 AUGUST**
***Military & Flying Machines Show***
**Damyns Hall Aerodrome, Upminster, Essex.**
***www.militaryandflyingmachines.org.uk***

**▶ 23-25 AUGUST**
***Military Odyssey***
**The Kent Show Ground, Detling, Kent.**
***www.military-odyssey.com***

**▶ 20-21 SEPTEMBER**
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## BROADER COVERAGE

Dear Sir,
I read with interest your feature on the Tet Offensive during the American war in Vietnam (issue three) as someone who once studied Modern American History at university. The first two issues of *History Of War* had a bias towards the First and Second World Wars, so it was refreshing to see that you were brave enough to feature a conflict from a different era on the cover of your third issue – especially given the amount of coverage the First World War is getting in the media at the moment. I would like to see further non-First/Second World War cover features in your forthcoming issues – other conflicts may not have had the same impact as the World Wars, but they've all been integral in shaping our world as we know it.
**Gareth Stathem** *via e-mail*

## READY FOR ACTION

Dear Sir,
My family and I regularly attend re-enactments of famous battles – they're a great day out for all, even when it rains! Could your Events section of your Dispatches pages be more comprehensive in terms of listing all the re-enactments that are taking place in any given month all over the country (and even abroad)? We would definitely make use of such information. Similarly, could you please publish a list of military museums, perhaps at the back of your magazine, with details of any one-off exhibitions they're displaying?
**Grant Harding** *via e-mail*

*It's good to hear that you're getting out and about, and that you're introducing other members of your family (we presume children) to the joys of history. Your requests have been noted!*

## NORMANDY, HERE WE COME

Dear Sir,
My father's father fought in the Second World War, and I'd like to take my dad to visit the Normandy beaches this summer, once the "rush" has died down following the commemorations in June. I read your magazine while staying with my dad over Easter, and saw that there are companies that specialise in organising battlefield visits. The feature I read was about battlegrounds from the American Civil War, but do these companies also organise trips closer to home? And to the Normandy beaches in particular? If so, how much do they cost?
**Victoria Fullerton** *via e-mail*

*We visit the beaches where the D-Day landings took place in this very issue – turn to page 63, where you'll see that a five-day trip with Leger Holidays costs £375pp, based on two sharing*

## HOW DO I CONTRIBUTE?

Dear Sir,
I'm a freelance writer and journalist specialising in military history, and I would dearly like to contribute to *History Of War*. I'm particularly interested in writing about the American Civil War (I enjoyed the feature on visiting battlefields in America in your third issue) and anything involving the Russian military. Can you explain how one would go about getting an article published in your magazine? I'm sure that other potential authors would also like to know
**Marvin Gilby** *Sheffield*

*We don't accept unsolicited contributions, though we are always looking for new writers to pen features for History Of War The best thing to do is email Paul Pettengale, the editorial director, with details of your areas of knowledge, what other publications you've been published in (magazines or otherwise) and examples of your previously published work. We'd also like to know if you have access to relevant photography*

**The Tet Offensive of the Vietnam War featured on the cover of issue 3 of *History of War***

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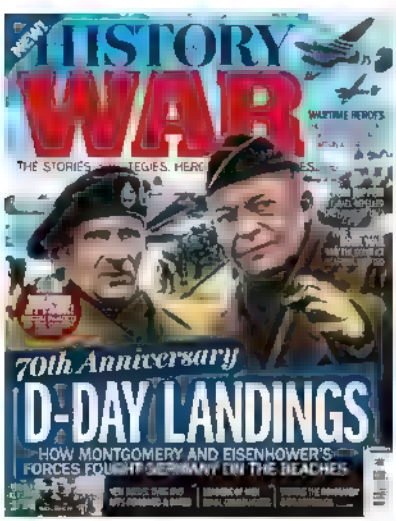
HISTORY WAR
70th Anniversary
D-DAY LANDINGS
HOW MONTGOMERY AND EISENHOWER'S FORCES FOUGHT SECOND WORLD WAR ON THE BEACHES

*Cover illustration Rob Hefferan*

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*70th Anniversary*

# The 1944 D-Day Landings

# WAR ON THE BEACHES

**Second World War:** On the 70th anniversary of D-Day, *History Of War* looks back at how the largest amphibious operation in military history unfolded, and how more than 150,000 men risked life and limb to storm the Normandy coast and liberate France from German occupation

AS WAS ITS CUSTOM, on the evening of 5 June 1944, the BBC's French-language service broadcast personal messages after the news. This evening, there was an unusually large number – 325 – and it took an hour to get through them. One message – "I will bring the eglantine" – was particularly significant. It was the order to the Resistance throughout northern France to implement Operation Vert, the scheme for rail sabotage.

As the broadcast continued, other announcements activated Operation Tortue, the destruction of bridges and highways; Operation Bleu, the disruption of the electricity supply system; and Operation Violet, the cutting of telephone and telegraph links. Before midnight, teams of the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) were moving into action. In the area of the Normandy beachheads, FFI intelligence chief Guillaume Mercader, a renowned cyclist who had come close to winning the Tour de France, pedalled at breakneck speed along coastal roads carrying orders from team to team. In Caen, stationmaster Albert Auge and his men set about disabling the locomotives in the city's marshalling yards. Further west, teams commanded by café owner André Farine cut the telephone cables leading out of Cherbourg. Meanwhile, other teams led by grocer Yves Gresslin dynamited the railway lines linking Cherbourg, Saint Lô and Paris. In Brittany, teams of the Deuxième Régiment des Chasseurs Parachutistes (RCP) – the Free French equivalent of the SAS – parachuted down to join some 3,500 Resistance activists. By morning, they'd carved a swathe of destruction through eastern Brittany, wrecking railway bridges and tracks, demolishing electricity pylons, and establishing roadblocks covered by machine-gun and bazooka teams. They took every step to stop the 150,000 German troops in Brittany from reinforcing the beachhead quickly.

**A cyclist who had come close to winning the Tour de France pedalled at breakneck speed, carrying orders from team to team**

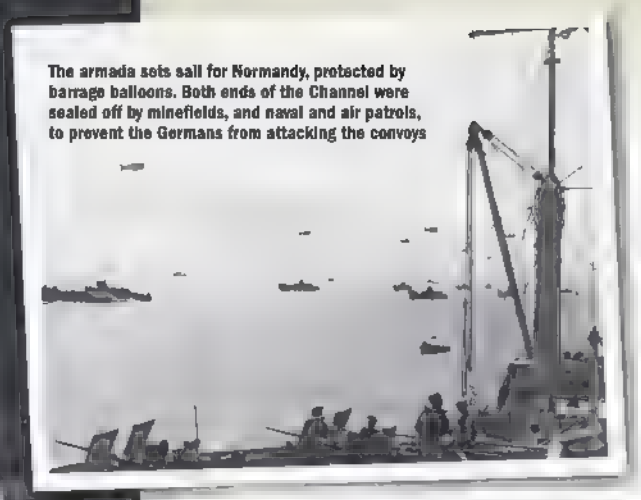
Some 600km away, large sections of the lines radiating from Dijon – the hub of the railway network in eastern France – erupted in explosions; in all, 37 cuts were made. Across the whole of France, the first few hours of FFI operations saw the rail network cut in 950 places, causing the derailment of 180 trains ▶

**◀ BACKSTORY**

When the German forces invaded France in the summer of 1940, the Allies were forced to evacuate at Dunkirk. But they would not be repelled for long – in May 1943, a plan was put into place to storm back into France in an operation codenamed Overlord.

British troops disembark from their landing craft off the coast of Normandy, 6 June. The British assault was launched around an hour after US troops had landed at

Army



The armada sets sail for Normandy, protected by barrage balloons. Both ends of the Channel were sealed off by minefields, and naval and air patrols, to prevent the Germans from attacking the convoys

Meanwhile, wave upon wave of transport aircraft, many towing gliders, had been taking off from England. Some 1,270 aircraft – C-47s, old converted bombers like the Stirling and the Albermarle, and about 850 British Horsa and Hamilcar and US Waco gliders – stretched from southern England to the coasts of Normandy, carrying 17,000 men. The first phase of the air landings, Operation Titanic, was underway at midnight, as groups of the SAS accompanied by some 500 dummy paratroopers dropped behind Omaha, Gold and Juno beaches, well away from the actual landing zones. At Le Molay-Littry, 10km behind Omaha beach – the HQ of the 352nd Division – Major General Dietrich Kraiss took fright and had his reserve regiment up and searching the woods south-east of Isigny.

**Officers of the British Sixth Airborne Division synchronise their watches before setting off for their drop zone in Normandy. The engine in the background belongs to an Armstrong Whitworth Albemarle troop transport**

At about the same time, US and British pathfinder aircraft were dropping paratroopers equipped with flares and lamps onto the landing zones. Twenty minutes later, the aircraft and gliders of the US IX Troop Carrier Command, carrying the 101st and 82nd Airborne, passed over the western coast of the Cotentin Peninsula. They were detected by the radar of the 243rd Artillery Regiment, and a stream of anti-aircraft fire suddenly hit the transports, bringing down several C-47s. Pilots, uncertain of their bearings, nevertheless gave the paratroopers the order to jump. Some dropped directly into streams of tracer; others, weighed down by equipment and tangled in their parachutes, plummeted into flooded fields and drowned. Those who made it down unscathed blundered around in the dark trying to form their units. Brigadier General Maxwell Taylor, commander of the 101st, landed alone in a field and scouted around before he found some men. By the end of the day, only about 2,500 of the 6,600 men who had jumped had assembled in the drop zones. Some of the 101st had landed on the outskirts of Cherbourg, while three paratroopers had come down on Pointe du Hoc, west of Omaha beach.

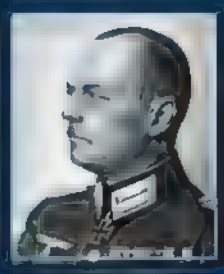
## Heavy casualties

With a drop zone just to the north of the 101st, the 82nd also suffered heavy casualties in the jump, with 272 men killed or injured, while some landed 32km from the drop zone. About 30 men did land right on top of their primary objective, the town of Sainte-Mère Église, part of which had been set on fire by a bombing raid earlier in the day. The German garrison had little difficulty picking off most of the paratroopers as they descended, silhouetted against the flames, although one man's parachute became snagged on the church steeple and he hung there for two hours before he was taken prisoner. Another hundred or so, landing on the outskirts of the town, were rapidly organised by Lieutenant Colonel Edward Krause

## Key figures

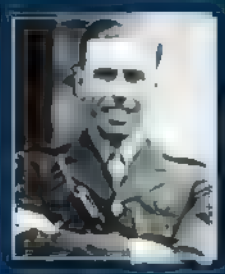
**DWIGHT EISENHOWER**
Eisenhower became Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in February 1944. Mindful of the sacrifices made by his men, he tried to personally visit every division that took part in Operation Overlord. He became the US President in 1953.

**BERNARD MONTGOMERY**
Having been in charge of the Eighth Army during the successful Battle of El Alamein in 1942, "Monty" was given command of Allied ground forces during Operation Overlord. In his 1958 memoirs, he criticised Eisenhower's leadership.



**KARL VON RUNDSTEDT**
Commander-in-Chief of the German Army at the time of Operation Overlord, von Rundstedt was dismissed by Adolf Hitler following the campaign (although he was later reinstated). After the war, he was arrested for war crimes but, due to poor health, did not stand trial.

**MAXWELL TAYLOR**
In charge of the US 101st Airborne Division during Operation Overlord, Taylor was the first Allied General to land in France on D-Day. Eisenhower would later say of him, "The risks he ran were greater than I asked any other agent or emissary to take during the war."



**TERENCE OTWAY**
Otway led the paratrooper assault on the heavily fortified Merville Battery – one of the first places to be attacked on D-Day – an action that saved many Allied lives. After a stray shell landed close to him, Otway suffered concussion and was evacuated.

**FRIEDRICH DOLLMANN**
Commander of the German Seventh Army, Dollmann was absent when the D-Day landings began, conducting a map exercise. On his return, he was criticised for his slow response to the invasion, and he died just weeks later, rumoured to have committed suicide.

Fighting their way into the town, they quickly killed or captured the garrison, then spent the rest of the day fighting off German counter-attacks.

The divisional commander, Major General Matthew B. Ridgeway, managed to get control of about 2,000 of the 6,396 men who had jumped and, like the 101st's Maxwell Taylor, he felt that he was presiding over chaos. In fact, although nothing had gone as planned, the scattered bands of paratroopers posed serious problems for the German defenders, the 709th and 91st Divisions, who were equally affected by the chaos. Just before dawn, the 91st's veteran commander, Major General Wilhelm Falley, having been suddenly called away to a war game in Rennes, was returning to his HQ near Picauville when he was ambushed and killed by US paratroopers. The 91st was an excellent division, but the sudden disappearance of its commander meant that it remained inert and largely ineffective throughout D-Day.

While the Americans were landing on the Cotentin, the spearhead of British Sixth Airborne approached its landing zone. At 12.15am on 6 June, six Halifax bombers released six Horsa gliders at 1,500m over Cabourg. Five minutes later, three gliders crash-landed within 45m of their objective – the bridges at Bénouville over the Caen Canal and Orne River, the eastern boundary of the British beachhead. Led by Major John Howard, an assault party of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry charged across the bridges, sending the Germans fleeing in confusion. Other elements of Sixth Airborne had been coming down further east – 68 gliders of the Fifth Parachute Brigade landed at Ranville, 1.5km from the Bénouville bridges. Eighteen gliders were destroyed when they ran into the extensive pole-and-wire network ("bird traps") put up by the Germans. Chester Wilmot, the Australian war correspondent, landed with Fifth Brigade and recorded that he "could see silhouettes of other gliders, twisted and wrecked, making grotesque patterns against the sky. Some had buried their noses in the soil; others had lost a wheel or a wing; one had crashed into a house; two had crashed into each other."

The divisional commander, Major General Richard "Windy" Gale, landed at 3am near Wilmot, commandeered a horse in a nearby field and rode towards Ranville, collecting groups of Sixth Airborne along the way. By 6am, he had established a divisional HQ at the Château de Heaume in Ranville, and had the equivalent of several battalions dug in to the east, just in time to prepare for German counter-attacks, which would continue throughout the day.

## Monty and Ike's war of minds

**They may have collaborated on one of the most successful military campaigns in history, but Bernard Montgomery and Dwight Eisenhower were like chalk and cheese. Eisenhower was generally a mild-mannered, considerate man – in fact, one of the reasons he was given the role of Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force during the Second World War was his ability to manage egos. Montgomery, on the other hand, was self-confident to the point of being arrogant, even going as far as to say that he was one of the three best Generals in military history.**

**Needless to say, the two men didn't always see eye to eye. Following the D-Day invasion, when the Allies were considering how best to force the Germans into submission, Montgomery openly disagreed with Eisenhower's broad-front strategy, which would see the Allied forces protecting their flanks from German counter-attack, the Englishman preferring a single thrust that would see the Allies drive straight towards Berlin in an arrow-like push. Monty's eagerness to oppose his superior may have been born out of the fact that he didn't rate Eisenhower as a soldier (although he did commend the American on other aspects of his personality, saying, "His real strength lies in his human qualities. He has the power of drawing the hearts of men towards him, as a magnet attracts the bit of metal. He merely has to smile at you and you trust him at once").**

**While Eisenhower responded to Montgomery's criticism by saying, "Steady, Monty, you can't speak to me like that; I'm your boss," he did eventually give in to his General's insistence and consented to his plan. Codenamed Operation Market Garden, it turned out to be the largest airborne operation ever conducted up to that point, with around 30,000 British and US troops flown in behind enemy lines to capture the eight bridges that spanned the network of canals and rivers on the Dutch/German border. The plan was for British tanks and infantry to then push up a road leading from the Allied frontline to these bridges, relieving the airborne troops before crossing. However, the Allied forces encountered much greater German resistance than had been expected, and the objective failed, giving Eisenhower the impetus to revert to his own strategy, which he stuck with until the end of the war.**

**Eisenhower had been proved right on this occasion, but that didn't stop Montgomery reiterating his disapproval of his former boss in a letter to a friend that was discovered many years after the war ended. In it, the Englishman wrote, "It was only when Ike [Eisenhower], flushed by victory, descended from the lofty perch of Supreme Commander and took tactical command himself of the armies, that our troubles began."**

**For all their differences, though, on that fateful day in June 1944 – and in the weeks that followed – Eisenhower and Montgomery got the formula just right. The D-Day landings were executed with considerably fewer casualties than had been anticipated, and less than three months later Paris had been liberated from German rule.**

Getty Images

## Missed targets

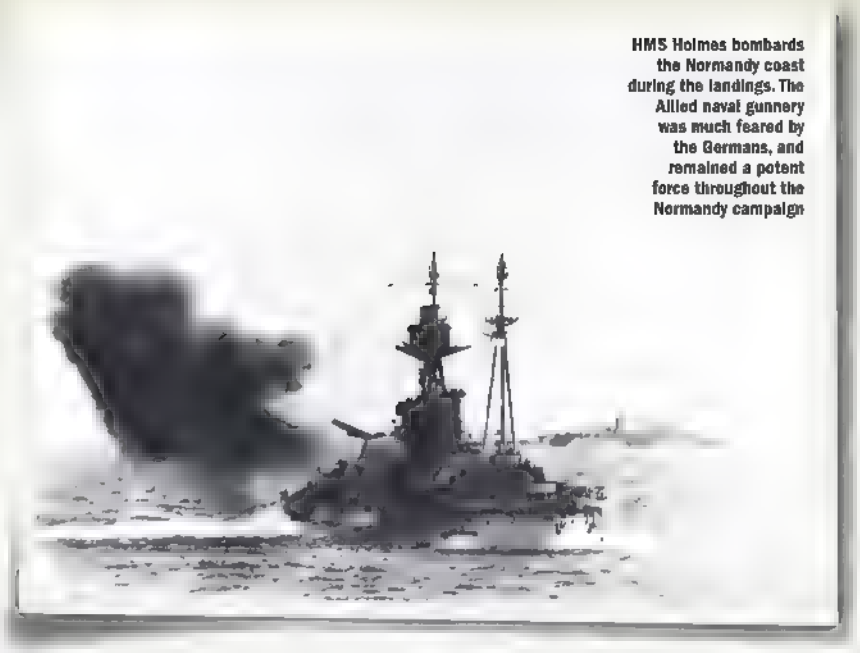
Meanwhile, the most important mission given to Sixth Airborne that night had run into difficulties. Lieutenant Colonel Terence Otway's Ninth Parachute Battalion was assigned the task of destroying a German battery just back from the coast at Merville, 6.5km north-east of Ranville, which could hit the entire length of Sword beach. Ten minutes before Otway's men were over the drop zone, 100 RAF Lancasters attempted to drop 1,800kg of bombs on the battery, but most landed south at Varaville. A few minutes later, as the Ninth's Dakotas passed over Varaville, they were hit by heavy flak. When they jumped, the paratroopers came down over a wide area, with scores of men drowning when they dropped straight into the swamps of the Dives River. By 4am, instead of the 600 men with mortars, anti-tank guns and jeeps he had expected, Otway could muster only 155, none of whom had more than light weapons. At 4.30am, two of three Horsa gliders scheduled to crash-land among the battery casements appeared overhead. One overshot the target, while the other – hit by flak from the battery – crashed among the trees.

Knowing that if he delayed, the British landings would be brought under heavy fire, Otway led his men into an assault. By 6am, after bitter hand-to-hand fighting, the battery was in British hands; 110 dead and wounded Germans lay piled in the bunkers, along with 65 paratroopers. Unfortunately, Otway now discovered that he had no way of destroying the guns. Grenades down the barrels had no effect, though smashing the sights did put them out of action temporarily. Having done all he could, Otway and his 80 men set off to clear Le Plein, allowing the Germans to reoccupy the battery, which they soon got up and running again.

With the airborne forces assault underway, feint attacks were being made against beaches near Boulogne by motor launches pumping smoke from special generators, and towing balloons with reflectors, while squadrons of Bomber Command dropped "window" (strips of aluminium), which further confused German radar. At 3am, German searchlights were sweeping the Pas de Calais, and shore batteries had opened up on radar blips, while German night fighters hunted the decoy air force. Meanwhile, 160km south-west, 1,056 ▶

**After bitter hand-to-hand fighting, the battery was in British hands; 110 dead and wounded Germans lay in the bunkers, along with 65 paratroopers**

General Aircraft Hamilcar gliders prepare to land in Normandy



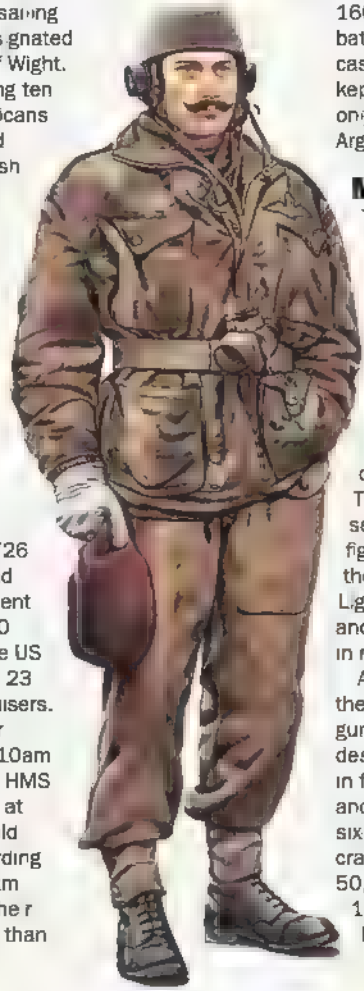
HMS Holmes bombards the Normandy coast during the landings. The Allied naval gunnery was much feared by the Germans, and remained a potent force throughout the Normandy campaign

Lancaster, Halifax and Mosquito aircraft of Bomber Command flew in ten groups to attack the ten largest German positions on the actual landing beaches. In all, 5,000 tons of bombs were dropped.

Under cover of this activity, convoys of the invasion force had been sailing towards a rendezvous point designated Area Z, south-east of the Isle of Wight. From here, they had moved along ten mine-swept channels, the Americans steering south-west to Utah and Omaha beaches, while the British and Canadians steamed south-east for Gold, Juno and Sword, their navigation assisted by the blinking lights on the conning towers of two midget submarines lying off shore. Despite heavy weather, by 5am the invasion fleet was in position, covering a sea area 80km west to east, and 32km north to south. In this 2,600 square kilometres were more ships than had ever been assembled in one place and at one time in history – 5,726 transports and landing craft, and 1,213 warships and bombardment vessels, crammed with 287,000 men. The warships included three US and four British battleships, and 23 US, British, French and Polish cruisers.

As the last aircraft of Bomber Command wheeled north, at 3.10am the 152mm guns of the cruiser HMS Orion opened up on the battery at Mont Fleury, 1.5km south of Gold beach. Warships began bombarding another 29 positions along 80km of Normandy coast, the fall of their shot being directed by no fewer than

**▼ BRITISH GLIDER PILOT**
Unlike their US counterparts, British glider pilots were trained combat troops who fought on the ground after landing their gliders



160 spotter aircraft. Some German batteries proved tenacious: four guns in casements at Longues on Gold beach kept up fire for two hours, and fell silent only after the British cruisers Ajax and Argonaut had fired 179 shells at them.

## Massive bunkers

The response of the German Navy was confined to three torpedo boats based in Le Havre – Möwe, Jaguar and Falke – which were attempting to attack the British battleships Warspite and Ramillies under cover of a smoke screen laid by the RAF along the eastern flank of the landing zone. They succeeded instead in hitting the Norwegian destroyer Svenner, which sank rapidly. The Luftwaffe was nowhere to be seen. At first, 36 British and 16 US fighter squadrons patrolled above the beaches, four squadrons of P-38 Lightnings circled the Channel, and another 30 fighter squadrons remained in reserve in southern England.

As the landing craft moved towards the shore, the fire of the heavy naval guns was joined by fire from the destroyers, banks of rockets screaming in from specially adapted landing craft and, finally, direct fire from 119mm and six-pounder guns mounted on landing craft. In all, the bombarding forces fired 50,000 shells and rockets – around 10,000 for each of the landing beaches. Only a few minutes before troops were to land on their respective beaches, a final wave of some 1,600 bombers of the US Eighth and Ninth Air Forces passed overhead, attacking the immediate hinterland.

H-hour for Utah and Omaha – the westernmost beaches – was set at 6.30am, one hour after low tide. Further east along the British beaches, where the tide came in later, H-hour was set for 7.30am. At first light off Utah, troops of the US Fourth Division clambered down landing nets into their LCTs for the 11km trip to the beach. At 6am, while it was still 6.5km from the coast, German gunners got the range of the invasion force, and hit and sank Patrol Craft (PC) 1261, the boat guiding the assault forces to the landing beach. The rest of the force pressed on but, 4km from the coast, the landing craft were caught in a strong current running off the beach. The bombardment had also obscured traces of landing marks vital to navigation.

All these factors meant that when US troops waded ashore at 6.31am, they were 2km south of their intended landing site. The assistant divisional commander of Fourth Division, Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt Jr – son of the famous President – was a veteran of three assault landings in North Africa and the Mediterranean. Coming ashore with the first waves, Roosevelt realised that the accident had been fortuitous, as the section of the beach they had landed on was virtually undefended.

## D-Day Timeline

**1940 MAY-JUNE**
France falls to German forces, leading to a mass evacuation of 338,000 British troops from Dunkirk.

**1943 12-27 MAY**
After regrouping, the Allies – including Winston Churchill and Theodore Roosevelt – meet at the Trident Conference in Washington to plan an invasion of France the following year.

**17-24 AUGUST**
An initial draft of the plan is accepted at the Quebec Conference in Canada. The proposed date for the start of the campaign – which is codenamed Operation Overlord – is 1 May 1944, though this will change.

**31 DECEMBER**
Dwight Eisenhower and Bernard Montgomery, the two men who will lead the Allied assault in France, see the plans for the first time. They both insist that the scale of the initial attack will need to be increased.

**1944 23 MARCH**
Allied forces, observed by Churchill, Eisenhower and other top officials, undertake a huge demonstration parachute drop in preparation for the invasion.

**APRIL**
The Allied Expeditionary Air Force begins a campaign of 3,200 reconnaissance missions over the coast of northern France, where it will take photographs until the invasion.

**28 APRIL**
During a training outing for the invasion, known as Exercise Tiger, 946 US soldiers and sailors are killed near Slapton, Devon, by a combination of friendly fire and a surprise attack by German E-boats.

## As the naval gunfire lifted, the Rangers swarmed up the ladders. The Germans came out of the bunkers and showered them with grenades

Discovering a causeway, by 9.30am he had moved the leading elements to within 2.5km of Sainte-Mère Église. Casualties had been low – 197, of whom 60 had been lost at sea when their landing craft had foundered.

Just across the Vire estuary to the east, a very different situation faced US troops. For 10km from Grandcamp-Les-Bains to Pointe de la Percée, the coast rose in a series of cliffs and small promontories. About halfway along was Pointe du Hoc, whose 90m cliffs made it a formidable position. Here, the Germans had been constructing one of the most powerful batteries of the Atlantic Wall – six 155mm guns in massive bunkers of reinforced concrete and steel. With a maximum range of some 16,500m, Pointe du Hoc's guns could easily reach the invasion assembly area to the north, the Utah beach landing to the west and the Omaha beach landing to the east. Allied air forces had repeatedly bombed the headland and, since 5am, the 406mm guns of the US battleship Texas had been pounding it. But there could be no guarantee that these means alone would knock out the batteries. That task had been given to three companies of the Second Ranger Battalion, commanded by a former Texas high school football coach, Colonel James E. Rudder. After being transported to the foot of the cliff in amphibious DUKWs, they were to scale it, then knock out what was left of the German positions.

Rudder's force was scheduled to land at 6.30am, but rough seas and poor navigation delayed its arrival until 7.10am. The destroyers USS Satterlee and HMS Tarlybant closed to within 3km of the shore and opened up on the top of the cliffs, forcing the Germans to keep their heads down. From their DUKWs pitching in the swell at the base of the cliffs, the Rangers fired up rockets attached to grappling hooks and rope ladders, which arced up over the cliffs. As the naval gunfire lifted, the Rangers swarmed up the ladders. The Germans came out of the bunkers and showered them with grenades. Some exploded, toppling Rangers from their ladders, but the Rangers fielded many, lobbing them back over the cliff top.

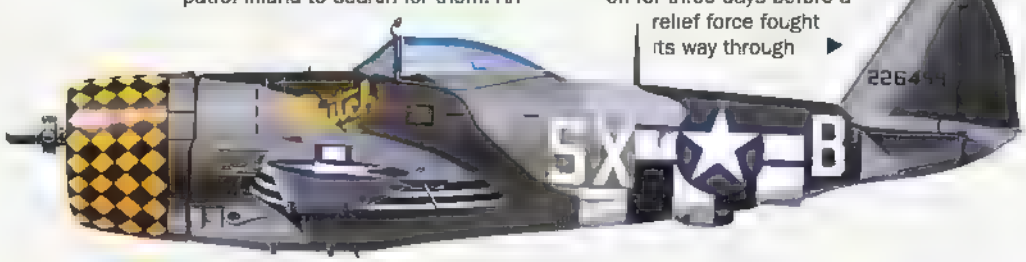
The Rangers were strong, agile and lightly equipped, but it still took them ten minutes to scale the 30m. Fighting their way through a moonscape of craters and twisted wreckage, squads of men attacked each of the German bunkers, destroying them with satchel charges. However, none housed the 155mm guns. Rudder guessed that the Germans – knowing that Pointe du Hoc would suffer huge bombardment – had repositioned the guns, and that because the guns needed the fire-control mechanism in the command bunker at the very tip of the Pointe, they would not be far away.

Just after 8am, he sent a fighting patrol inland to search for them. An hour later, after crossing the coast road 1.5km south of Pointe du Hoc, the patrol discovered the camouflaged guns, with the gunners huddling against hedgerows in a nearby field. Scaring the gunners away with bursts of automatic fire, the Rangers destroyed the breeches of the guns with thermite charges, and set fire to piles of propellant, which lay nearby.

### Things start to go wrong

So far, the operation had been an outstanding success, but now things began to go wrong. A communications breakdown prevented word that the Rangers had taken Pointe du Hoc from reaching the HQ ship 16km to the north until late that night. In the absence of any word from Rudder, HQ decided that the mission had failed and diverted the reinforcement battalions to Omaha beach. The Germans, quickly recovering, put in counter-attacks, cut off the party south of the road and pushed Rudder back to the tip of the Pointe. The Rangers had to hold on for three days before a relief force fought its way through ▶

**PULLING TOGETHER**
WHILE THE BULK OF ALLIED TROOPS ON D-DAY WERE BRITISH, AMERICAN AND CANADIAN, THERE WERE ALSO SOLDIERS FROM BELGIUM, AUSTRALIA, GREECE AND OTHER NATIONS




▼ **EIGHTH WONDER**
**A Republic P-47 Thunderbolt of the 353rd Fighter Group, US Eighth Air Force, Raydon, Essex, wearing its black and white invasion stripes. The Thunderbolt proved to be an efficient fighter-bomber**

**5 JUNE**
As the Allied fleet assembles at a rendezvous point south-east of the Isle of Wight, known as Piccadilly Circus, minesweepers begin clearing a path across the English Channel.

**5 JUNE**
Eisenhower suggested 5 June as the day of the invasion. However, poor weather conditions on 4 June persuade the Allied commanders that they should delay the assault until the following day.

**5 JUNE**
Just before midnight – several hours before the beach landings – some 1,200 aircraft depart England to transport three airborne divisions to their drop zones behind enemy lines.

**6 JUNE**
At 5am, Allied vessels begin their bombardment of German defences along the French coastline. The attack will continue until 6.25am.

**6 JUNE**
At 6.31am, US infantrymen disembark from their transports and invade the beaches at Utah and Omaha.

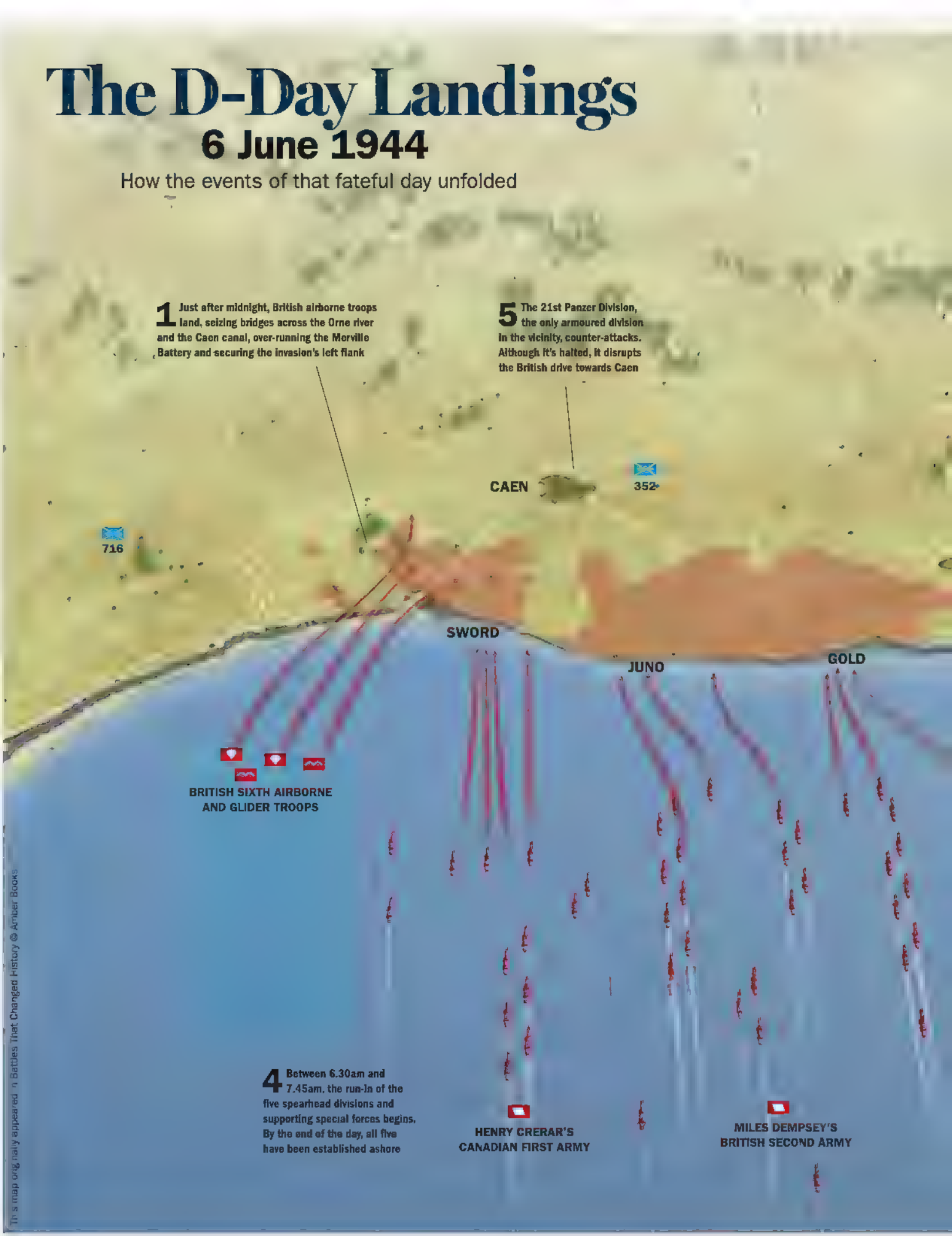
**6 JUNE**
At 7.30am, British and Canadian forces land on Gold, Juno and Sword beaches.

**6 JUNE**
By the evening, around 155,000 men (including paratroopers) and 20,000 vehicles have landed, with a casualty rate of some 10,000 men (far fewer than had been anticipated).

# The D-Day Landings

## 6 June 1944

How the events of that fateful day unfolded


1 Just after midnight, British airborne troops land, seizing bridges across the Orne river and the Caen canal, over-running the Merville Battery and securing the invasion's left flank
5 The 21st Panzer Division, the only armoured division in the vicinity, counter-attacks. Although it's halted, it disrupts the British drive towards Caen
CAEN
352
716
SWORD
JUNO
GOLD
BRITISH SIXTH AIRBORNE AND GLIDER TROOPS
4 Between 6.30am and 7.45am, the run-in of the five spearhead divisions and supporting special forces begins. By the end of the day, all five have been established ashore
HENRY CRERAR'S CANADIAN FIRST ARMY
MILES DEMPSEY'S BRITISH SECOND ARMY

This map originally appeared in Battles That Changed History © Amber Books

KEY
Allied Forces
Allied Division
Allied Armour
Allied Airborne
Allied Glider
German Division
German Forces
3 At 3am, 1,900 Allied bombers attack the German defences in the landing area. This is followed by a naval bombardment from seven battleships, 18 cruisers, 43 destroyers and a monitor
COUTANCES
91
SAINT-LÔ
2 At 1am, US airborne troops land to the west of Utah beach to secure the western flank of the invasion beaches
709
CARENTAN
BAYEUX
OMAHA
UTAH
243
US 82ND AND 101ST AIRBORNE
J LAWTON COLLINS' US VII CORPS
LEONARD GEROW'S US V CORPS
GERARD BUCKNALL'S BRITISH XXX CORPS
OMAR BRADLEY'S US FIRST ARMY

from Omaha, by which time only 90 of Rudder's 225 men were still in action

US troops landing at Omaha 6.5km to the east had faced a different set of problems. The beach, a magnificent sweep of sand 275m wide at low tide and extending 6.4km east from Pointe de la Percée to the rocks and cliffs of the appropriately named Côte du Rage north of Sainte-Honorine, was such an obvious place to land that it had been heavily defended. The Germans had placed three belts of obstacles down to the low water mark, and had then added barbed wire along the top of a 2m wood and masonry sea wall, which ran the entire length of the beach. Beyond the sea wall was an esplanade, and then a shelf of water meadow between 90m and 365m wide, which rose precipitously to 60m bracken-covered bluffs. The Wehrmacht's engineers had laced the entire length of the esplanade with mines, dug a 2m anti-tank ditch at the inland edge of the esplanade, and dug machine-gun and mortar positions on top of the bluffs

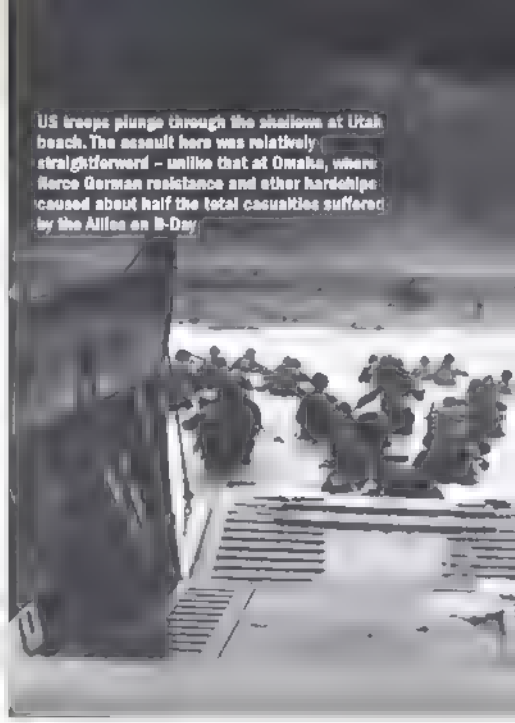
But the most formidable defences had been positioned in four gullies, or draws, which intersected the bluffs and were named after the hamlets built in them – Vierville, Moulins, Saint-Laurent and Colleville. The Germans knew that the only means of getting off the beach was through the draws, and at each of them they had constructed bunkers with machine guns, mortars, and 20mm, 75mm and 88mm guns, all with interlocking arcs of fire. And across the Vierville draw, through which a metalled road ran inland, they had constructed a wall of reinforced concrete, 9m high and 3m thick. In all, the beach was defended by some 100 guns and mortars, and about 200 machine guns, manned by the three battalions of Colonel Ernst Goth's 916th Grenadier Regiment – part of the 352nd Division – most of whom were veterans of the Eastern Front, though they had received some 18-year-old conscripts

**CROSSWORD CLUES?**
A NUMBER OF D-DAY CODEWORDS, INCLUDING UTAH, OMAHA AND OVERLORD, APPEARED IN *THE DAILY TELEGRAPH* CROSSWORDS IN THE BUILD-UP TO THE LANDINGS. MI5 LOOKED INTO IT BUT FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF LEAKS

Just before dawn, waves of B-17s flew overhead to bomb the defences in the draws, but pathfinders dropped their marking flares too far inland. As a result, all the bombs fell south of the beaches, some up to 3km from the coast. The transports were 20km out to sea, half as far again as they had anchored off Utah. In addition, winds scudding in from the north-west made this stretch of water far rougher than Utah. Heavily laden troops of the 116th Infantry Regiment, US 29th Division, and the 16th Regiment of the US First Infantry Division, clambered down scaling nets into the rolling and plunging landing craft. As they pulled away, loaded to the brim, waves broke over them, swamping ten completely within minutes. Most of the 300 men aboard were drowned Some craft managed to keep afloat – but only just – men baling out furiously with their helmets. The larger LCTs with their cargoes of DD tanks, seeing the difficulties the landing craft were in, closed to within 6.5km of the shore before launching their Shermans. Even in good conditions, the DD tanks had a freeboard of less than 1m. Some of the waves were over 2m high, and 27 out of 29 tanks were soon swamped. As they sank, they turned upside down, carrying their crews to the bottom

## Bullet-swept sand

The Omaha landing had been choreographed like a musical, with about 30 different assault waves, all timed to arrive at 5-10 minute intervals. But the same current that had pulled the Americans off target at Utah now pulled craft eastward, and the assault waves became mixed up. The novelist Ernest Hemingway – now a war correspondent – was aboard one of the leading craft, plunging through the high seas. He recorded troops "wax-grey with sea sickness, fighting it off, trying to hold



US troops plunge through the shallows at Utah beach. The assault here was relatively straightforward – unlike that at Omaha, where fierce German resistance and other hardships caused about half the total casualties suffered by the Allies on D-Day

onto themselves before they had to grab for the steel side of the boat". Above them, heavy naval shells roared landward, "the concussion and the report... jarring the men's helmets".

But smoke and low cloud meant that much of the naval gunfire support failed to find a target. About 900m from the shore, machine-gun bullets began to splash around the landing craft, while mortar bombs arced overhead. The landing craft of A-Company of the 116th were the first to ground on the sand, about 275m directly in front of the Vierville draw. As the ramps were lowered, the defenders fired directly into the landing craft, killing most and forcing the survivors to leap over the sides and hide in the surf. Exactly the same thing was happening to the men of the First Division, coming ashore at Les Moulins 1,650m to the east. As succeeding waves came in, the craft grounded further from the shore until troops, weighed down with heavy equipment, were landing in neck-deep water. All along the beach, men were struggling towards the shore in the face of increasingly heavy fire. Some took cover behind concrete obstacles, some lay half submerged at the water's edge, unable to get across the bullet-swept sand to the relative safety of the sea wall. *Life* magazine's Frank Capa, who went in with the first wave, found shelter beyond a tank trap, and felt safe enough to shoot the events unfolding around him. He shot three rolls of film that day, 106 frames in all. But when he returned to London all but 11 of the photos were ruined during processing.

A German officer at Vierville reported by telephone to Krass that the invasion at Omaha had been stopped, and that he anticipated an American attempt to withdraw. Watching the disaster from a DUKW offshore, the commander of the advanced HQ, Colonel Benjamin B. Talley, had the same idea and radioed back that the landings should be suspended. The message was relayed back to Genera

US Rangers prepare for the assault on Utah beach. Some are armed with specialised equipment for their role, such as Bangalore torpedoes for clearing barbed wire, and grapnels to assist in scaling the faces of sheer cliffs

Omar Bradley on the command ship USS Augusta, who sent an urgent message to SHAEF asking permission to abandon the beachhead. A communications foul-up meant that Eisenhower did not receive it until late in the day, by which time the situation had changed.

## Smoke haze

The bracken on the bluffs was now on fire, and a smoke haze was beginning to cover parts of the beach. German fire was most intense around the heavily defended draws and, as visibility worsened, more and more Americans who had had the good fortune to land between the draws managed to make the relative safety of the sea wall At 7.30am, the assistant divisional commander of 29 Division, Brigadier General Cota, landed with his staff almost halfway between the Vierville and Les Moulins draws. Surveying the shambles around him, Cota realised that what was needed was not a General but a Platoon Commander. Moving from group to group huddled behind the sea wall, Cota found engineers and Rangers, as well as infantrymen from the 29th and First Divisions. Quickly organising a company-sized force, he got the engineers to clear the barbed wire with Bangalore torpedoes; then, with the command "Rangers lead the way", he urged his force across the esplanade and up a fold in the bluffs, where they were protected from machine-gun fire. Here, Cota set up a radio, which by about 10am had at last established shore-to-ship communications. Having managed to collect together about 600 men, he now sent the Rangers west behind the bluffs to attack the Vierville draw from the inland side, while the infantry from the 116th worked their way towards Vierville on the seaward side of the bluffs. By 11am, the combined attacks, now supported by properly directed naval gunfire, had driven the Germans from Vierville.

Elsewhere along the beach, the tide of battle was slowly swinging the Americans' way. Second Lieutenant John M. Spalding of E Company, Second Battalion of the 16th Infantry, part of First Division, had landed halfway between the Colleville and Saint Laurent draws. Collecting together 23 men, he led them for 365m through the high reeds of a coastal swamp, and up a fold in the bluffs, to reach the crest where the US cemetery now stands. Spalding then turned west and attacked the east side of the Saint Laurent exit. At 8.15am, Colonel George A. Taylor, commander of the 16th Infantry, came ashore and rallied small knots of survivors within earshot: "Two kinds of people are staying on this beach – the dead and those who are going to die. Now, let's get the hell out of here!"

The better part of two battalions now made their way up the bluffs, some following what was to be called "Spalding's Trail", and then moved to attack Saint Laurent and Colleville from the rear. At about 10.30am, two landing craft – LCT 30 and LCI (L) 544 – steamed full ahead through the obstacles off the beach opposite Colleville on the eastern side, firing all their weapons at enemy strongpoints At the same time, two destroyers came broadside on to within 1km of the beach opposite Les Moulins. With their keels scraping the bottom, they pumped 133mm shells into enemy positions to the east, one round passing through the embrasure of a bunker on the west side of the Colleville draw. Under cover of this fire, engineers drove bulldozers through the dunes at the Saint Laurent draw, filling the anti-tank ditch and the minefield. As Spalding's men and other elements of the 16th Regiment were already attacking from the rear, the German defenders at Saint Laurent surrendered a little after 11am. ▶

**Taylor rallied survivors within earshot: "Two kinds of people are staying on this beach – the dead and those who are going to die. Now, let's get out of here!"**

## "I think we shall be glad to reach land"

One of the men who took part in the D-Day landings was British Private George Allen (pictured left). On the voyage to northern France, he described his feelings and experiences in his personal diary. Published here, they make for fascinating, and incredibly poignant, reading...

"I am writing this aboard the SS Ocean Vision, a ship of about 10,000 tons. I can see the coast of Normandy about two miles away. There is a slight swell, but the crew are busy unloading a vehicle. In the near distance, the big ships of the Navy are shelling the French coast, while around us are hundreds of ships of all descriptions, each unloading its precious cargo.

"At this very moment, I can hear the Navy shelling again, right opposite me. There is a French town. I don't know the name of it yet, but I can clearly see what look like some big hotels.

"A ship about 300 yards away is busy unloading troops, while destroyers and corvettes are busily patrolling up and down. I can hear some aircraft overhead. Each of the ships here has its own barrage balloon, and the sky seems full of them."

We set sail in the Ocean Vision at about 4.30pm on Tuesday 6 June from Tilbury Dock. The following morning, we went through the Straits of Dover. Enemy action was expected and we were all sent below deck, except for those on duty. We set up a very heavy smokescreen and were lucky to see no enemy action. As we sailed on down the Channel by night, there was quite a swell and the weather turned rainy and squally.

"We eventually woke at about 5am in our present position, and what a sight it is. I think it will always live in my memory.

"I don't know what the Jerries thought when they saw it, but it must have given them a scare.

"It seems a lot of ships are quite near the coast now, and I think they are unloading. They appear to be smaller craft than this one, although most are this size.

"Now there is a constant rumbling reborn, just as though there is a heavy pitched battle going on. Yet the funny thing is the lack of any enemy opposition to our unloading and disembarking.

TopFoto

"I have just been looking at some pictures of home and my family. How peaceful it seems there. It gives me a queer feeling of the intensity of the present moment – but there is a very cheerful atmosphere aboard; a devil-may-care feeling.

"Six small craft are passing, bound for the shore with troops. Well, the time is now 1950 hours and I must finish.

"I think we are now leaving the ship – our lot, anyway – as we are the headquarters: so now for La Belle Francais and whatever it may bring.

"I have just come over the side of the ship and am now on the big raft carrying 100 vehicles and 200 men.

"Now we are off, sailing on sleepwalker's unique journey. We are about halfway and somebody's playing an accordion. Night is settling in and it is almost 9pm.

"Now the coast looms very near. The Jerries have blocked the harbour with ships they have scuttled, but we bypass them. Jellyfish are all around and there is very little swell now.

"Nearly there: I can see the beach quite easily. Straight ahead of us is a cape, to the right are cliffs, and then the blocked ships and the harbour.

"There is quite a breeze fanning my face, and someone has just thrown an empty tin in the water, sending up a splash in my face.

"We are changing direction towards the left, following some small ships. I can feel some rain on my face; it looks like a storm coming.

"Fifteen Jerry planes have just come over. Our guns open up as he drops bombs, and bullets are flying about.

"We sail on unscathed; quite a fright! We man our Lewis guns and rifles. I think we shall be glad to reach land."

Thus, by 11.30am, the Americans had captured both the Vierville and Saint Laurent exits, and were beginning to move off the beach in strength. German fire at other strongpoints was beginning to slacken as the defenders ran short of ammunition. The 352nd Division's commander, Major General Dietrich Kraiss, was under the impression until about midday that his forces were holding, and when it became clear that the Americans had taken Vierville and were advancing out of the Saint Laurent draw, he had no reserves to hand, having despatched them to the south-west to deal with a dummy parachute drop. Early in the afternoon, Kraiss moved a battalion-sized force, supported by 12 75mm self-propelled guns, into the Colleville area, but their counter-attack was soon stopped by naval gunfire.

By evening, the Americans held a shallow beachhead from Vierville to Colleville, and ever more troops were coming ashore. But the price had been heavy: around 300 of the 566 Rangers had become casualties, along with hundreds of sailors manning the landing craft, and engineers attempting to clear beach obstacles. But the biggest losses had been incurred by the infantry divisions: the 29th had suffered 2,440 casualties and the First Division 1,744. The price for the 352nd Division had been almost as high, with 2,500 prisoners taken – many of whom were wounded – and as many as 1,000 dead

**MAN DOWN**
THE FIRST BRITISH SOLDIER KILLED ON D-DAY WAS LIEUTENANT DEN BROTHERIDGE OF THE SIXTH AIRBORNE DIVISION, WHO WAS SHOT IN THE NECK WHILE LEADING HIS PLATOON

## Smashed radios

The slaughter on Omaha had been going on for more than an hour when landing craft carrying the First Battalion Royal Hampshire Regiment grounded several hundred metres east of Le Hamel on Gold beach, 10km east of Colleville. The defenders – also of the 352nd Division – put down a withering fire, hitting most of the landing craft. Unlike the Americans, the British had decided that sea conditions were too rough to permit the launch of the DD tanks. Hence the Hampshires found themselves on their own. Soon, the commanding officer, his second-in-command, the artillery-support officers and the forward HQ were either dead or wounded, and the radios were smashed.

A replay of the American experience at Omaha seemed in the offing, when the corps commander, Lieutenant General Bucknell, ordered the LCTs to brave the obstacles and take the tanks directly onto the beach. The German positions at Le Hamel hit at least 20 of the large craft, but the majority made it to the shore and lowered their ramps. Instead of the expected infantry troops, the waiting German machine-gunners were stunned to see huge armoured vehicles emerging – the "Funnies" of the 79th Armoured Division. Crab tanks flailed paths through the minefields up to the beach, oblivious to the metallic scream of the machine-gun bullets spraying around them. A Crab commanded by Sergeant Lindsay RE, which landed to the east of Le Hamel, smashed through the centre of the strongly defended town, firing and flailing alternately, until it came up alongside the main German emplacement. Edging his tank around to the front, Lindsay swung the muzzle of his gun into the embrasure, fired and blew the 88mm and its entire crew out of the back.

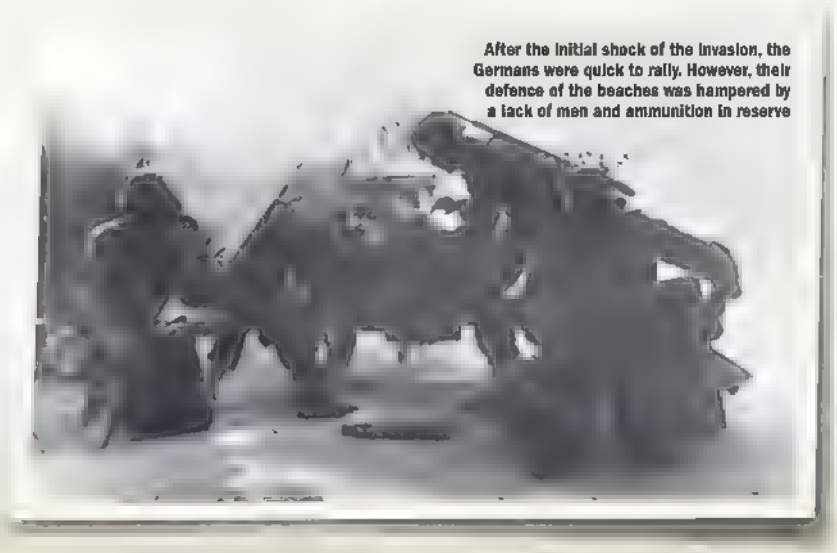
**Crab tanks flailed paths through the minefields up to the beach, oblivious to the metallic scream of the machine-gun bullets spraying around them**

In the centre of Gold beach, another assault battalion – the First Dorset – had come ashore to the east of Les Roquettes, this time supported by Crabs and other AVREs, and quickly pushed inland. Another battalion – the Second Devon – came ashore at Le Hamel, followed closely by five landing craft carrying 47th (Royal Marine) Commando. Since the Hampshires had come ashore, the tide had risen considerably, submerging beach obstacles, and three of the landing craft hit mines, killing 43 and forcing the remainder to abandon equipment and swim for the shore. Though drastically reduced in numbers, those Commandos still fully equipped set off inland, bypassing enemy positions, to attack Port en Bessin – on the demarcation line between the British and American beaches – from the rear.

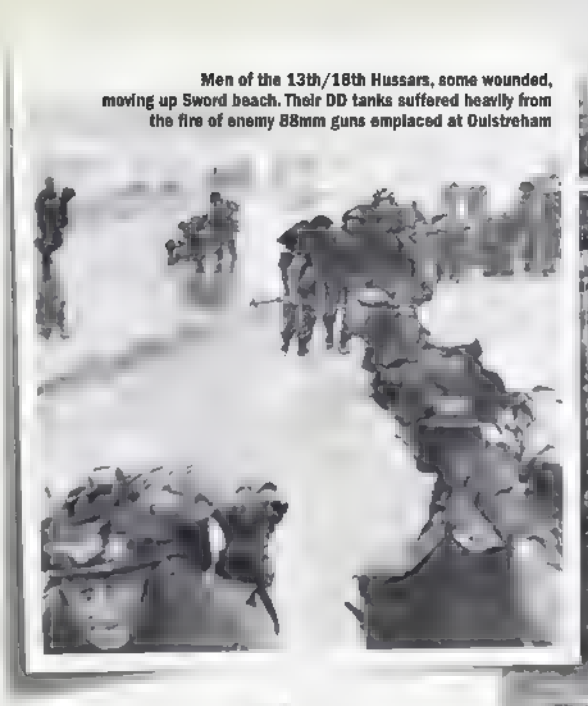
On the extreme eastern boundary of Gold beach, the Sixth Green Howards and the Fifth East Yorks came ashore to the west and east of La Rivière respectively. This area was held by the 441st Ost Battalion – part of the 716th Division – who broke and fled when the Fifth Yorks and Green Howards overran their main beach defences at about 10am. The commander of the German corps responsible for this sector ordered the 915th Regiment – the reserve of 352nd Division – which had been sent south-west during the night to deal with a phantom paratrooper drop, to move post haste to La Rivière, but this was easier said than done. The regiment had to cover nearly 32km, partly on foot, partly on bicycles, and partly in French motor vehicles, which kept breaking down. For virtually the rest of the day, the road to Bayeux was open, but the British didn't know this and concentrated on getting their forces ashore and consolidating the beachhead.

The Canadian Third Division, landing further east on Juno beach, had a tougher time. As they unloaded in a heavy swell, landing craft smashed into uncleared obstacles, detonating mines.

**THE DEFENCE** A Sergeant of the 916th Grenadier Regiment, 352nd Division, armed with a Mauser 7.9mm rifle. The 352nd Division was heavily involved in the fighting on D-Day, and was responsible for the high American casualties on Omaha beach



After the initial shock of the invasion, the Germans were quick to rally. However, their defence of the beaches was hampered by a lack of men and ammunition in reserve



Men of the 13th/18th Hussars, some wounded, moving up Sword beach. Their DD tanks suffered heavily from the fire of enemy 88mm guns emplaced at Ouistreham

The debris of a terrible day. The beaches are cleared, and the assault troops have been relieved by others whose task it is to push inland and consolidate before the German counter-attacks begin in earnest

Twenty of the 24 landing craft were lost in one battalion landing alone. All told, 90 of the 306 craft were sunk or disabled during the morning. Only 14 DD tanks of the Canadian First Hussars – launched at 3.3km in very rough seas – finally made it to the shore. One of the assaulting units, the Regina Rifles, was supposed to come into the east of the heavily defended town of Courseulles, but A Company landed too far to the west, right opposite the town. A mad dash up the beach to the relative safety of the harbour wall ended with 15 dead, blown up in a minefield. The remainder of the Regina Rifles – supported by Centaur tanks of the Royal Marines and AVREs of 79th Division – attacked into Courselles from the east, clearing the town house by house, so that it was not firmly in Canadian hands until mid-afternoon.

About 3km to the east, the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment's landing at Saint Aubin had gone like clockwork. The amphibious tanks of the Fort Garry Horse – launched from only 1.7km out – arrived simultaneously with the infantry, and together they crossed the sea wall and reduced enemy strongpoints. About 1.5km to the west at Bernières-sur-Mer, things had gone less well. Landing craft carrying the Queen's Own Rifles grounded opposite one of the town's strongpoints, and when the ramps were lowered, German machine guns sliced through the packed craft. Heavy casualties were also suffered by the supporting unit – the Régiment de la Chaudière (the Chauds) – when four of its five landing craft were hit and the majority of the regiment had to wade ashore. By this time, the Queens were fighting their way through Bernières-sur-Mer, and the Chauds moved in to help, stamping out all but the occasional sniper.

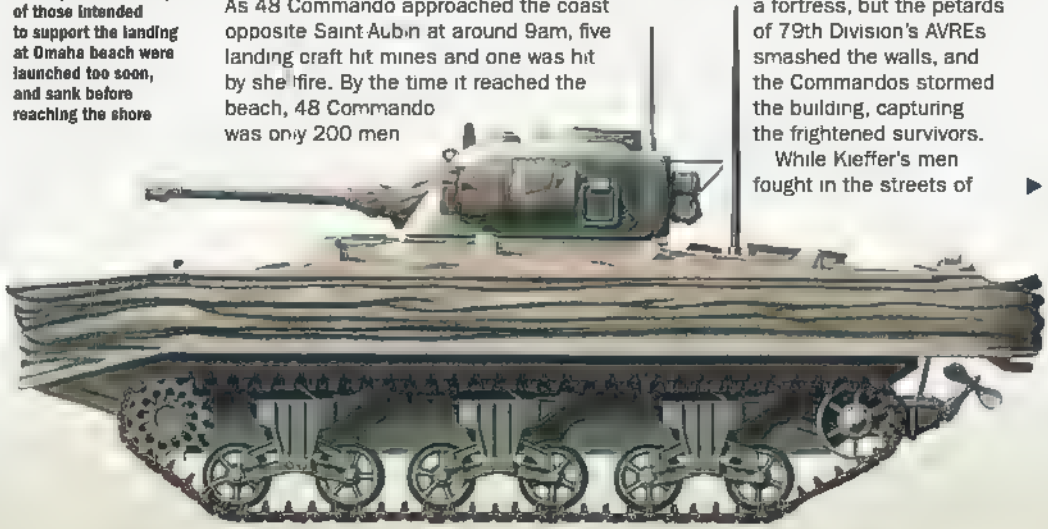
Throughout the morning, the rest of Canadian Third Division continued to land, with considerable congestion building up between Bernières and Saint Aubin. Assault engineers arranged to open up three routes through the shore obstructions, and from 2pm units of the division were expanding in and. Pushing 10km to the south-west, elements of the Canadian Seventh Brigade made contact with the British 50th Division at Creully, cutting the Caen-Arromanches road. Meanwhile, the North Nova Scotia Highlanders and 27th Armoured Brigade had pushed south along the Courseulles-Caen road, reaching Villons-les-Buissons only 8km north of their D-Day objective, Carpiquet Airport, 3km east of Caen.

## Frightened survivors

Sword beach, the destination of the British Third Division, lay 5km to the east of Saint Aubin and extended some 5km to the mouth of the Canal de Caen and the Orne River. Allied planners, worried about the gap between Juno and Sword that would be left by the main Canadian and British landings, decided to land 48 and 41 Royal Marine Commandos on either side, to speed up the merging of the British and Canadian beaches. As 48 Commando approached the coast opposite Saint Aubin at around 9am, five landing craft hit mines and one was hit by shellfire. By the time it reached the beach, 48 Commando was only 200 men strong. Pushing inland, this handful of survivors managed to take the village of Langrune, but further attempts to push eastwards were halted by German resistance. Landing 5km further east, 41 Commando had an easier time getting ashore, but was soon bogged down in the face of heavy German fire.

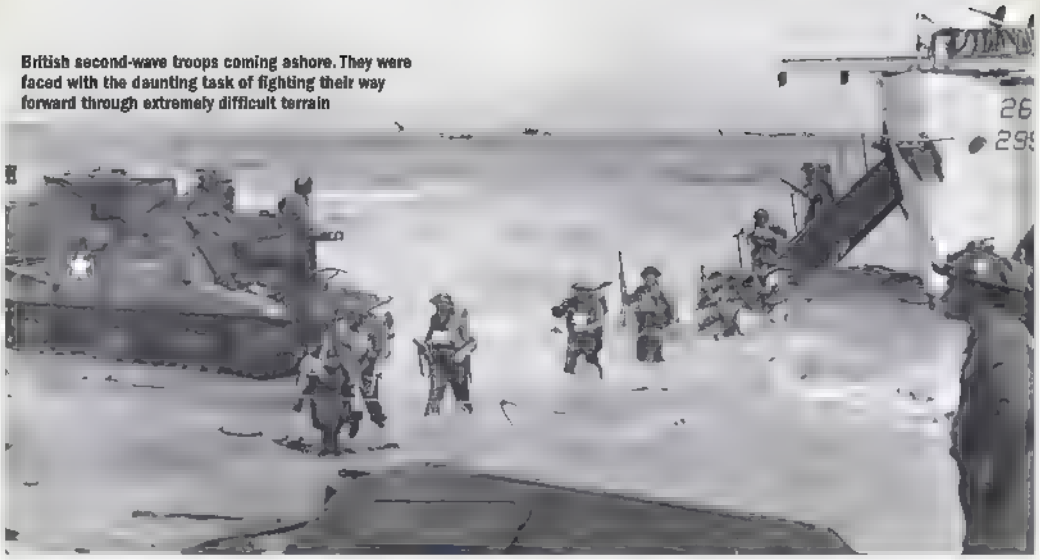
On the extreme eastern edge of Sword beach, opposite the town of Ouistreham, Lord Lovat's First Commando Brigade landed at the same time as the first DD and Crab tanks. The first troops onto the beach were Commandant Jean Kieffer's Free French Commando Battalion. A mortar bomb fell in the midst of one platoon as it charged from its landing craft, killing or maiming most of the men. Kieffer led his men east along the coast road into the streets of Ouistreham, systematically clearing the town, villa by villa. The centre of resistance was in Ouistreham's casino, a building on the esplanade with clear fields of fire along the beaches. The Germans had done their best to convert it into a fortress, but the petards of 79th Division's AVREs smashed the walls, and the Commandos stormed the building, capturing the frightened survivors.

While Kieffer's men fought in the streets of ▶



▼ **DD DAY** The British-designed amphibious DD tank, fitted with an inflatable skirt and a propeller. Many of those intended to support the landing at Omaha beach were launched too soon, and sank before reaching the shore

Ouistreham, the bulk of the Commandos under Lord Lovat pushed inland, aiming to link up with the by-now-hard-pressed paratroopers. Their route had been selected by Resistance intelligence and, as the men moved rapidly to the south-east, they avoided main roads and major strongpoints. Coming from the south, they could hear the noise of battle, the staccato chatter of the airborne's Bren guns intermingling with the scream of the German MG42s. Lord Lovat, perhaps recalling the last time a Campbell had come to the relief of a beleaguered garrison – that of Lucknow during the Indian Mutiny of 1857 – ordered his piper to play *Blue Bonnets Over The Border*. At 1pm, the Commandos and the airborne forces joined up



British second-wave troops coming ashore. They were faced with the daunting task of fighting their way forward through extremely difficult terrain

## Burning armour

The Commando assaults on Sword were outstandingly successful, but the bulk of Third Division had a very much harder time. The narrow frontage of Sword meant that Third Division could only land one brigade at a time, yet had the most difficult D-Day objective – the capture of Caen, a city with a population of around 100,000. Eighth Brigade, comprising the First Battalion South Lancashire Regiment, Second Battalion East Yorkshire Regiment, and the armour of the 13th/18th Royal Hussars and 79th Division, comprised the initial assault wave. With the sea being blown landward in long rollers, it was difficult to control the landing craft. The experience of weaving through the iron rails, ramps and pickets with Teller mines on top reminded Major A. D. Rouse of the South Lancashires of "groping through a grotesque petrified forest". The BBC's correspondent Howard Marshall, accompanying Eighth Brigade, remembered that "suddenly, as we tried to get between two of these tripart defence systems of the Germans, our craft swung, we touched a mine, there was a loud explosion, a thundering shudder of the whole craft, and water began pouring in."

The DD tanks of the 13th/18th Hussars and 79th Division were already ashore, but German 88mm guns firing from Ouistreham, and three guns firing from a strongpoint at La Breche just to the east of the landing, hit tank after tank, until the whole beach seemed to be a mass of burning armour. The South Lancashire attacked east, but it took nearly three hours to subdue La Breche, the regiment suffering 107 casualties, including its commander.

By mid-morning, the South Lancashire had taken Hermanville, 1.5km inland from La Breche, the East Yorkshire was clearing defences south of Ouistreham, and the battalion of the Suffolk Regiment – landing later and passing between the South Lancashire and East Yorkshire – was advancing up the slopes of Périers Ridge, 60m above sea level. Here, it ran into two strongpoints that the British had codenamed Morris and Hillman. Morris was a relatively small position – four guns and 67 men – that surrendered when the Suffolk attacked, but Hillman was a much tougher nut. It was a fortress 365m by 550m, well protected by wire and mines, and the HQ of the German 736th Regiment. The Germans easily repulsed the Suffolk's first attack, and the regiment's commander refused to have his men slaughtered in a renewed frontal assault. A deliberate attack, involving the integration of artillery and air support, with armour and infantry, went in late in the afternoon, but it wasn't until 8pm that the last of Hillman's defenders surrendered

By nightfall, the whole of the British Third Division was ashore, but had not advanced beyond Périers Ridge, 5km short of Caen. Weeks were to pass before they would advance any further.

**SHIP-SHAPE**
THE USS NEVADA, USED IN THE D-DAY LANDINGS, WAS THE ONLY BATTLESHIP TO ESCAPE FROM ITS DOCK DURING THE JAPANESE ATTACKS ON PEARL HARBOR IN 1941

**General Dollmann believed that these latter landings were diversions and that the earlier British landings were the main invasion**

For the Germans, the events of 6 June had been confusing. The day before, the weather had appeared so bad that Rommel had driven off from his HQ at La Roche-Guyon to visit his wife at Herrlingen in southern Germany, before seeing Hitler at Obersalzberg. The commander of Seventh Army, General Friedrich Dollmann, was equally sure that there would be no invasion and, on 5 June, had sent most of his staff officers to a war game at Rennes in Brittany. The first intimation that something untoward was about to happen came from 15th Army in the Pas de Calais, where the army commander General Hans von Salmuth, alarmed by Allied activity in the Channel, placed his forces on full alert. Von Rundstedt in Paris approved this measure but, given the severity of weather conditions, decided there was little point in alerting forces elsewhere.

At 2.15am, Hans Speidel was awoken with reports of paratrooper landings, but he had no information about their strength. When he finally got through to von Rundstedt by phone – who had no clearer information – both men convinced each other that the landings were merely drops to the French Resistance. By 4.30am, a different picture had begun to emerge. Radio messages were bringing reports that large numbers of ships had been sighted between the Cotentin Peninsula and the mouth of the Seine. Von Rundstedt still thought that this was a diversionary tactic, and that the real landing would come in the Pas de Calais area. However, as a precautionary measure, he ordered the 12th SS Hitlerjugend and the Panzer Lehr Divisions to prepare to move to the Normandy coast.

By 5.30am, when the first shells from the Allied naval bombardment hit the

**FLAME-THROWER**
The Churchill Mk VIII "Crocodile" flame-throwing tank. Compressed nitrogen forced fuel from the trailer to the flame gun, mounted in the normal machine-gun position. The weapon had a range of approximately 110m

coast, the hidden meaning of all the activity became clear, but there was a delay in transmitting this news to higher HQ stationed many kilometres inland. When Speidel finally managed to get a telephone connection with Rommel at 6.30am, he was still oblivious to the bombardment. He only passed on the reports of the paratrooper drops, thereby lulling the Field Marshal into a false sense of security. He soon acquired more definite information, but it took until 10am before he was able to get through to Rommel again to tell him that Allied landings were underway. The news galvanised Rommel into action, but it took him most of the day to drive back to his HQ – Hitler had previously issued an edict forbidding senior officers to travel by air any longer, lest they be shot down.

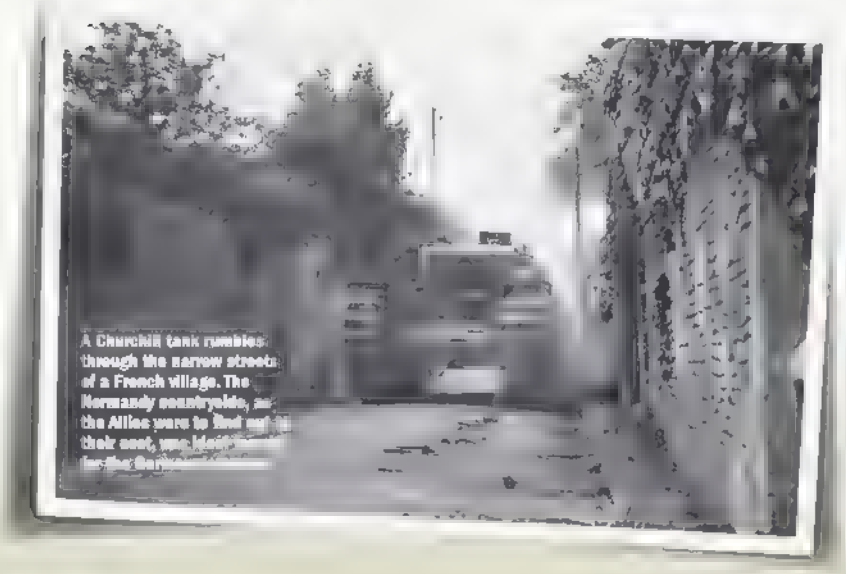
## Hitler's reaction

Down in Le Mans, General Dollmann's HQ staff remained ignorant of the landings until 8.45am, when they received news that British troops were coming ashore opposite Caen. They did not hear about the US landings to the west until 11am. Dollmann believed that these latter landings were diversions, and that the earlier British landings were the main invasion. Von Rundstedt did not share this opinion. Even after he had received confirmation of the landings, he continued to believe that they were feints. The real invasion, he thought, would soon descend on the Pas de Calais.

This was also Hitler's own view. When the news of the landings reached him at 10am, while he was holding court at Berchtesgaden, he seemed almost relieved. "They've come at last!" he announced. For the previous two years, increasingly large German forces had been tied down along the Atlantic coast while Allied armies remained poised in southern England. Now that the Allies had committed themselves to decisive action, the German army could crush them. Albert Speer, the Armaments Minister, was with Hitler on 6 June: his memoirs record the Führer's chain of reasoning that day: "Do you recall? Among the many reports we've received, there was one that exactly predicted the landing site, and the day and hour. That only confirms my opinion that this is not the real invasion yet."

Hitler was at first reluctant to authorise the release of the armoured reserve. Meanwhile, German units were fighting desperately all along the coast, but these were battles fought by battalions and companies who had little or no contact with high HQ. On the extreme east of the beachhead, Major General Edgar Feuchtinger, commanding the 21st Panzer Division (a formation that had served with Rommel in North Africa), sent his tanks against the paratroopers on the Orne bridges before dawn, even though he had not received orders to do so. By 10am, the 21st was engaged with the paratroopers and was starting to gain the upper hand when Feuchtinger received his first message from high command, ordering him to move to defend Caen. It took the 21st the rest of the morning and the early part of the afternoon to carry out the order. It wasted most of the day disengaging and moving.

Railway travellers at a London station eagerly study the evening newspapers. The reports from Normandy were optimistic, and carefully censored

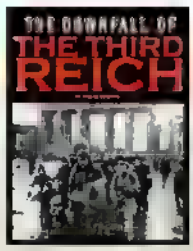


A Churchill tank rumbles through the narrow streets of a French village. The Normandy countryside, as the Allies were to find out to their cost, was ideal for defending troops

By mid-afternoon, many of Feuchtinger's tanks were low on fuel, but his logistics officers were unable to contact depots in Caen to have more sent forward. Even so, a battle group of 21st Panzer probed around the right flank of British Third Division, discovered the still-open gap between Sword and Juno, and six tanks and a rifle company succeeded in reaching the coast. At this point, transport aircraft and gliders, destined for Sixth Airborne's landings east of the Orne, passed overhead. The battle-group commander, convinced that he was about to be cut off by another Allied airborne landing, pulled back from the corridor, allowing the merging of Sword and Juno to occur a few hours later.

By dusk on 6 June, the German response was starting to become much more coordinated. The panzer reserves, the 12th SS, 2nd SS, Panzer Lehr and 17th Panzer Grenadiers, had been ordered to move towards the beachheads. But by then it was all too late. The Germans had misinterpreted the true nature of the landings, which was in part due to the deceptions of Operation Fortitude, and in part the result of a catastrophic communications failure between the various levels of command. The German troops had generally fought well, but when reinforcements had failed to arrive and when they ran low on ammunition, they had either surrendered or been overwhelmed. Many Allied leaders had expected a repeat of Gallipoli; instead, 130,000 troops had landed from the sea and another 22,500 had arrived from the air, all for 10,000 casualties, half of which were inflicted on Omaha. It was true that British 50th Division could have taken Bayeux and did not, and that Canadian Third Division had stopped short of Carpiquet and British Third Division had not made it to Caen. But for the Allies it had been a good day.

This feature is an edited extract from the book *The Downfall Of The Third Reich* by Dr Duncan Anderson. It is available from Amber Books: www.amberbooks.co.uk



# VIKINGS ATTACK!

**Ancient Britain:** In the 8th Century, the warriors of Scandinavia set sail to plunder, conquer and settle in new lands. As Steve Jarratt explains, their presence in Britain would forever change the fortunes of its inhabitants, and act as the catalyst for the creation of the independent Kingdoms of England and Scotland

On 8 June 793, a group of foreign invaders attacked the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, lying two miles off the coast of Northumbria. The island had been home to a Christian monastery since 634 and was one of the most hallowed sites in Britain.

Reports suggest that "wretched heathen people" plundered the church's treasures, burning the wooden buildings and slaughtering the cattle for food. A number of monks were killed, with some forced into the sea to drown, while others were carried away in chains to be sold as slaves. The Vikings of Scandinavia had announced their arrival.

This unwarranted attack on a holy site sent shockwaves through Christian Europe. The scholarly monk Alcuin of York, a member of Charlemagne's court, was so distressed that he wrote letters to the English clergy, and even to King Ethelred himself. But rather than blame the heathen warriors, Alcuin saw it as God's wrath, saying, "Either this is the beginning of greater tribulation, or else the sins of the inhabitants have called it upon them. Truly, it has not happened by chance, but it is a sign that it was well merited by someone."

In truth, the behaviour in the region prior to the attack had been increasingly unholy, resulting in prophesies of whirlwinds and dragons. So whatever their precise actions, these raiders neatly fitted the bill as a group of bloodthirsty warriors delivering the punishment of God on wayward Christians. Lindisfarne's "pagan" marauders were most likely Norwegian, and had sailed not from mainland Norway but from base camps in the Orkney and Shetland Islands.

## Piratical activities

The original Old Norse term "viking" is both a noun and a verb, and actually refers to an expedition or adventure: a man or woman about to embark on such an adventure was termed a viking, and these people would "go on a viking". The term only came back into popular use in the English language in the middle of the 19th Century, when study of the Viking age became fashionable. The term is now accepted as referring to both the Scandinavian people of the period and their piratical activities.

The Viking age in European history runs from the 8th Century to the 12th, when the men and women of Denmark, Norway and Sweden set off in their longships and travelled the world – reaching as far afield as America and the Middle East – in search of adventure, treasure, trade and new lands to conquer and settle in.

For the population of England, the first experience of Vikings came in 789, when – according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*'s manuscripts – three Viking longships from Hordaland in Norway landed on the Isle of Portland in Dorset. The royal reeve, ▶

**These raiders neatly fitted the bill as a group of bloodthirsty warriors delivering the punishment of God**

**BACKSTORY ▶**
Scandinavian explorers began raiding Britain and Europe in the late 8th Century. After decades of minor sorties, the Danes sent a major force to England in 865, capturing East Anglia and Northumbria. The Anglo-Saxons then spent 400 years trying to push them out, only to be defeated by the invading Normans.

The flat-bottomed Viking longships – also known as Drekar or Dragon ships", were capable of crossing seas and then infiltrating inland rivers and

the King's official in Dorchester, and his companions went to bring the visitors back to town for questioning, and to record their presence as required by law. They were all killed

The Old English annal states, "This year, King Bertric took Edburga, the daughter of Offa, to wife. And in his days came first three ships of the Northmen from the land of robbers. The reeve then rode thereto, and would drive them to the King's town, for he knew not what they were; and there was he slain. These were the first ships of the Danish men that sought the land of the English nation."

**ANCIENT ARCHIVES**

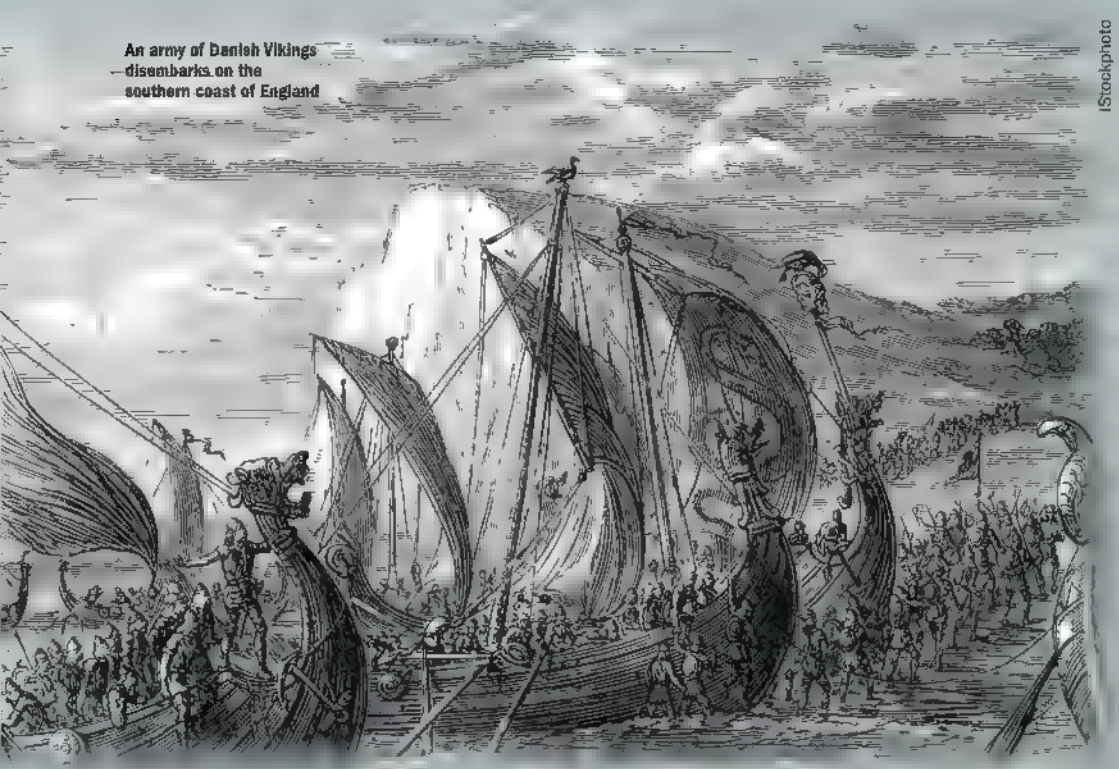
MUCH OF WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT VIKING ACTIVITY COMES FROM THE *ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE* – ANNALS THAT WERE KEPT BY MONKS FROM THE LATE 9TH CENTURY UP UNTIL 1154

## Barbaric attack

Undoubtedly, there were other minor raids, but none would have the impact of the next recorded visitation, four years later at Lindisfarne. The barbaric attack on the Holy Island is generally regarded as the beginning of the Viking age in Britain.

Monkwearmouth-Jarrow Abbey was sacked 12 months later, and many other attacks occurred in the decades to follow. Iona Abbey, on the west coast of Scotland, was attacked in 795, set on fire in 802, and was raided again in 806, resulting in the death of 68 monks. A large number of monasteries in Scotland and northern England were destroyed during this period, many of which simply vanished from the records. However, these raids weren't driven by any religious motivations – this was the first time the Vikings had come into contact with Christianity. It was simply opportunism, and the Scandinavians were no doubt amazed at these unguarded buildings, stacked with riches and located on isolated islands or peninsulas, within easy reach of their longships.

Raids continued sporadically during the early 9th Century, but the Vikings' first major incursion into England came when the Isle of Sheppey in Kent became a winter camp for occupying Danes in 835. A year later, a fleet of around 35 ships landed an army of Vikings on the north coast of Devon. A force of several hundred Danes were engaged by the Anglo-Saxon army under Egbert, King of Wessex, at the Battle of Carhampton, but the Vikings won and the *Chronicle* records a great slaughter.



An army of Danish Vikings disembarks on the southern coast of England

iStockphoto

However, the Viking warriors weren't invincible. Two years later, in 838, they invaded again, this time joining forces with the Dumnonians, a tribe of British Celts living in Cornwall. But on this occasion, Egbert and his troops were victorious at the Battle of Hingston Down and, following the defeat, Cornwall was incorporated into the Wessex empire.

Viking activity steadily grew during the mid-800s: recorded as 844 (though thought to be as late as 858), King Rædwulf of Northumbria was killed during a raid. Then, in 851, a Danish force of some 350 ships plundered London and Canterbury before landing at Wembury near Plymouth. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reports that the West Saxon army under King Ethelwulf – son of Egbert – fought the invaders at Oak Lea (probably Ockley in Surrey), and that the Danish army was defeated, suffering "the greatest slaughter... we have heard tell of up to this present day".

## Shot with arrows

Despite these setbacks, the onslaught continued. In the autumn of 865, a large army of Vikings landed in East Anglia led by King Ivar "the Boneless" Ragnarsson, his brothers Halfdan and Ubbe, and the chieftain Guthrum. The "Great Heathen Army", as the *Chronicle* refers to it, met little resistance and the locals made peace with the Vikings with the gift of horses. From its base in Thetford, the army moved north to capture York (which they called Jórvik) in November 866. A vassal king was installed and the army wintered there. An attempt to repel the invaders by men of Northumbria failed.

Over the next few years, an army of around 2,000-3,000 Scandinavian warriors roamed the country, heading south into Mercia to capture Nottingham in 867, before travelling back to York, where it stayed until 869. The Vikings

## TIMELINE THE VIKING AGE

**787** The first reported Viking sighting in Britain takes place in Portland, Dorset. The royal reeve and his men are killed.

**793** Vikings attack the monastery on Lindisfarne, killing the monks are looting the treasures.

**832** Egbert, the King of Wessex, defeats Beornwulf, the King of Mercia, to establish Wessex as a major region of power.

**844** Redwulf, the King of Northumbria, is killed during a Viking raid.

**865** The "Great Heathen Army" invades, led by King Ivar Ragnarsson, and his brothers Halfdan and Ubba. Viking forces capture the city of York.

**871** King Ethelred and his brother Alfred defeat the Viking army at the Battle of Ashdown in Berkshire.

**876** Vikings from Denmark, Norway and Sweden settle permanently in England.

The period from around 700 to 1100 is notable for a burst of Viking activity across Europe. Swedish fleets sailed along rivers into Germany, Poland and the heart of Russia, then headed south across the Black Sea to Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul).

Renowned warriors, Viking mercenaries were employed to fight for a succession of Russian princes, and were hired to combat the forces of Islam in southern Italy. Many Russian Vikings (known as Varangians) found their way into the Byzantine army, and went on expeditions to Italy in 935 and Crete in 949. They are also recorded as fighting the Arabs in 955.

Vikings from Denmark and Norway headed west to Britain and Ireland, and south into France, and even besieged Paris on a number of occasions. From here, they headed south into Spain and Portugal, then sailed to Morocco and across the Mediterranean.

Norsemen discovered Iceland in around 870, and settled in Greenland in 982. They were also the first Europeans to set foot on North American soil in the 1100s, landing on the island of Newfoundland – although they never made a permanent settlement there.

A Viking Drakkar sails along the Normandy coastline

then returned to Thetford, but this time found the citizens less accommodating. The local King, Edmund, took the fight to the invaders, but lost and was captured and killed. Edmund the Martyr, as he's now known, was beaten, shot with arrows and then beheaded.

England's main problem at this time was that the nation itself was a patchwork of groups divided by culture, language and religion, and split between warring Angle and Saxon Kingdoms. There were no major standing armies, and most defences were inward-facing towards hostile neighbours. Also, the influence of the church weighed heavy on the land, growing fat on the piety of its starving populace, and proving an easy target for raiders looking for treasure and food. In contrast to the downtrodden Britons, the Vikings were a big, strong race, with proven battlefield tactics and a cunning duplicity when occasion served, feigning attacks (and occasionally death) to outwit their opposition.

In the summer of 1870, another massive army arrived, this time led by King Bagsecg. Suitably reinforced, the Vikings decided to conquer Wessex.

They moved to Reading as their point of departure and, on 4 January 871, a Viking party was defeated at Englefield by West Saxon soldiers. Four days later, the men were joined by the main army led by King Ethelred – son of Ethelwulf – and his brother Alfred, and the combined armies marched on the Viking camp at Reading. The Saxons were forced to retreat, but regrouped and defeated the Vikings a few days later at the Battle of Ashdown on the Berkshire Downs. This was a brilliant victory for the Saxons, and the 21-year-old Alfred is largely credited with its success – although both sides took heavy casualties, including that of Bagsecg and five Danish Earls. (It's worth noting that these battles were often fought by forces numbering fewer than 1,000 on either side – a far cry from the epic confrontations of the 18th and 19th Centuries.) The Vikings would go on to win the next two engagements, at Old Basing in Hampshire and Marton in Wiltshire. In April, King Ethelred died and the throne passed to Alfred, who had already gained the epithet Alfred the Great.

**Over the next few years, an army of around 2,000-3,000 Scandinavian warriors roamed the country**

## Keeping the peace

Over the next few years, the Viking army moved from Reading to London, then back to Northumbria to quell an uprising, before settling in Lincolnshire for the winter of 872, and in Repton in Derbyshire at the end of 873. For the most part, whenever the invaders appeared, they were simply paid off by the locals in order to keep the peace. However, in 874, the Great Heathen Army drove off the Mercian King Burgred, and installed its own man on the throne, Ceolwulf II.

At Repton, the Viking army split into two, with forces under Halfdan moving north to conquer Northumbria, while the other half, led by Guthrum, headed for ▶

**886**

886 | 892 | 894 | 896 | 900 | 917 | 937

886 — King Alfred agrees on a border between his Kingdom and land ruled by King Guthrum, an area known as "the Danelaw".

892 — A huge army of Danes sails from Boulogne in 250 ships and lands in Kent. The army splits into two forces.

894 — Saxon forces attack the Vikings at Farnham, causing them to retreat.

**896**

896 — After four years of fighting, Alfred and his son Edward – finally eject the remaining Viking forces from England.

900 — Vikings establish rule over the north of Scotland.

917 — Edward the Elder attacks the Viking stronghold in Tempsford, and the local King is killed.

**937**

937 — A Danish army invades Northumbria, but the Saxon King Athelstan engages it at Brunanburh. A huge battle ensues and the Saxons emerge victorious.

Cambridge. Halfdan drove north into Scotland during 875, fighting the Picts and Britons in the Kingdom of Strathclyde. When he returned a year later, he divided Northumbria up among his men, the *Chronicle* stating, "and this year, Halfdan shared out the land of the Northumbrians, and they began ploughing and earning an honest livelihood".

The other army under Guthrum moved back into Wessex, the last independent Kingdom; and, following another Saxon defeat at Wilton, Alfred had no choice but to make peace. Under the terms of the treaty, the Viking army duly relocated to London, but returned in 876, evading Alfred's men, and attacking and occupying Wareham on the south coast.

Alfred sought yet another peace, involving the exchange of hostages, but the Vikings broke their word, killed the hostages and fled to Exeter. Alfred then blockaded the enemy fleet in Devon and, with their relief fleet scattered by storms, the Vikings had no option but to withdraw. In the summer of 877, they returned to Mercia, which was divided up among the men and Ceolwulf, their vassal king.

In January 878, the Vikings executed a surprise assault on Chippenham, where Alfred had been staying over Christmas. The *Chronicle* reports that most of the people were killed, "except the King Alfred, and he with a little band made his way by wood and swamp, and after Easter he made a fort at Athelney in the marshes of Somerset, and from that fort kept fighting against the foe."

It was at this time that the story of Alfred burning the cakes came into being. On escaping the attack, Alfred supposedly made his way to the Somerset Levels, taking refuge with a peasant woman. When asked to watch the griddle cakes she was baking, Alfred, his mind focused on bigger issues, forgot and inadvertently let them burn. Not knowing the status of her guest, the peasant woman proceeded to scold him and allegedly hit him with a stick. Though probably untrue, the story is representative of the low point of the Saxon King's reign: exhausted, dispirited and on the run, forced to seek shelter from his poorest subjects.

But Alfred's fortunes were about to change. Riding to Ecgbryhtesstan – known as Egbert's Stone – he rallied the Saxon men from Somerset, Wiltshire and Hampshire, forming a new "fyrd", an army consisting of freemen levied to the cause.

**FASHION FALLACY**

THE NOTION OF HORNED VIKING HELMETS IS A MYTH, INVENTED BY ARTISTS SUCH AS SWEDEN'S GUSTAV MALMSTRÖM, AND COSTUME DESIGNER CARL EMIL DOEPLER, WHO MADE THEM FOR A PRODUCTION OF WAGNER'S *RING* CYCLE

In early May, the Saxon forces met Guthrum's Vikings at Edington. Using the Roman tactic of a shield wall, Alfred's men thrust spears through the gaps to inflict injuries on their enemies. The battle raged for most of the day but, eventually, the Vikings were worn down and chased back to their fortress in Chippenham, where they were trapped.

After 14 days, the starving Danes sued for peace. In the agreement (known to modern historians as the Treaty of Wedmore), Guthrum agreed to withdraw north of the Roman track called Watling Street, which runs between St Albans and Canterbury. In addition, the King and 29 of his chiefs were baptised and converted to Christianity.

The treaty divided England roughly diagonally from the mouth of the Mersey to the Thames. South of this line lay Mercia and Wessex, ruled by Alfred; to the north lay the region under Danish self-rule, termed the Danelaw. Alfred gained the territory of the deposed King Ceolwulf and the City of London, and rules for a peaceful co-existence were drawn up. However, the Vikings had captured a third of the English Kingdom in just 15 years

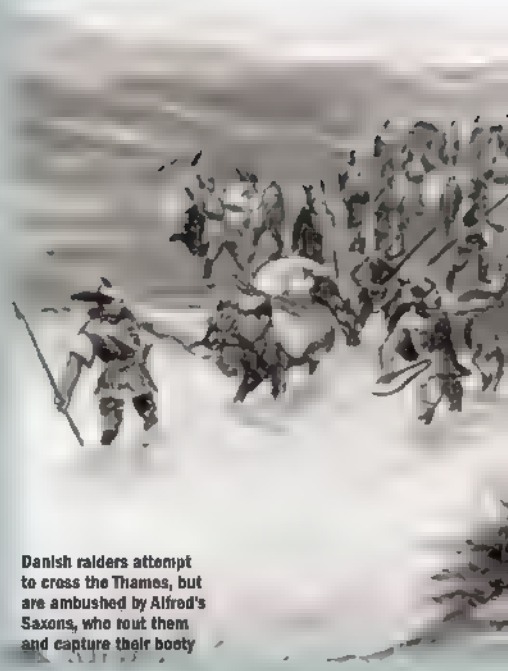
## Ferocious raid

There followed a period of relative peace, although Alfred still had to contend with raids and the occasional sea battle with Viking ships. The largest incursion took place in 885, when the Danes laid siege to Rochester; but, faced with Alfred's Anglo-Saxon army, the Viking forces withdrew and sailed elsewhere.

However, Guthrum's death in 889 created a power vacuum, and in 892 a vast army of Danes crossed from Boulogne in 330 boats, landing in Kent and basing itself at Appledore and at Milton in the Thames Estuary.

Rather than immediately attack, Alfred positioned his army between the two

**The chieftain Hastein set off to raid Mercia and, while he was away, Alfred's troops defeated his garrison**



Danish raiders attempt to cross the Thames, but are ambushed by Alfred's Saxons, who rout them and capture their booty

encampments and waited. The Vikings at Appledore struck out to the north-west but were caught by Saxon forces led by Alfred's son, Prince Edward, which attacked the Danes as they were boarding their ships at Farnham. The Vikings retreated and eventually reformed with the other group at Benfleet in Essex. This combined force, led by the chieftain Hastein, set off to raid Mercia; and while he was away, Alfred's troops, supported by local militia, defeated his garrison and captured or destroyed his ships.

Hastein was reinforced by men from the Kingdom of East Anglia and York, and in 893 embarked on a ferocious punitive raid along the Thames Valley and up the River Severn. The Vikings were pursued by an army consisting of Mercian and West Saxon troops, bolstered by warriors from Wales, and were eventually surrounded and besieged on the island of Buttington, near Welshpool. The starving Danes were forced to eat their horses, and after several weeks they broke out, suffering heavy casualties before eventually returning to East Anglia.

Again, the Viking army struck out and occupied the city of Chester. But rather than blockade the fortress, the Saxons proceeded to seize all the nearby cattle and make off with the crops. Once winter had passed, the starving Vikings marched into the south of Wales, leaving a trail of

## TIMELINE THE VIKING AGE

**954** Eric "Bloodaxe" Haraldsson, the last Viking King of Jórvik, is thrown out of York by King Eadred.

**980** With Ethelred the Unready on the throne, Viking raids begin again in earnest.

**991** Saxon forces trap Viking raiders near Maiden, but are defeated. Ethelred pays them off with the first of many "Danegeld" imbursements.

**994** Olaf of Norway and Sweyn Forkbeard, son of the Danish King, lead an invading army in an unsuccessful siege of London, and ravage the South East.

**1002** King Sweyn of Denmark invades England with his son, Cnut. They sail up the rivers Humber and Trent for Sweyn to be accepted as King in the Danelaw. Saxon King Ethelred the Unready flees abroad.

**1016** After a long exile, Edward the Confessor is invited to return from Normandy as King.

**1066** Harald Hardrada is defeated at Stamford Bridge. However, William the Conqueror, a descendant of the Vikings, invades England and, three weeks later, defeats Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings.

death and destruction in their wake. From here, they headed back along the Thames and the River Lea, wintering in a fort they had built, 20 miles north-east of London.

In the summer of 895, the Mercians of London raised an army to attack the Danes, but were routed. Later that year, Alfred blockaded the river by building two forts, forcing a section of Vikings to march overland to Bridgnorth in Shropshire, where they built another stronghold. The men left guarding the fort on the Lea were overpowered and their ships captured. The remaining Vikings wintered in Bridgnorth and, in the spring of 896, dispersed across the countryside, returning to Northumbria and East Anglia, with many heading back to Europe.

After four years of fighting, Alfred and his Saxons had finally subdued the Viking invasion. There were still occasional raids but Alfred had ships built, twice the size of the Viking longships, so that he could battle the Danes at sea. The great King finally died on 26 October 899.

## Challenge to the throne

Alfred was succeeded by his son Edward the Elder, but not without a challenge to the throne from Ethelwold, Edward's cousin and son of King Ethelred of Wessex. However, when faced by Edward's army, Ethelwold joined the Danes in Northumbria, and was accepted as King.

In 901, Ethelwold sailed with a fleet to East Anglia and, a year later, persuaded the Danes to launch attacks on Edward's territory in Wessex and Mercia. In retaliation, Edward led his troops, supported by the Anglo-Saxon men of Kent, on an assault into East Anglia, forcing the Vikings to return and defend their lands. Edward retreated but the men of Kent disobeyed the order to retire and, on 13 December, 902 engaged with the Danes at the Battle of the Holme in modern-day Cambridgeshire. The ▶

**W DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD**
VIKING MEN WERE EXPECTED TO CARRY A WEAPON AT ALL TIMES. SWORDS WERE EXPENSIVE TO MAKE AND THUS A SYMBOL OF STATUS

# THE KEY FIGURES

### ETHELRED OF WESSEX (837-871)

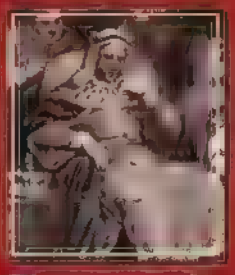
Son of King Ethelwulf, Ethelred had just succeeded to the throne when "the Great Heathen Army" descended on England. Within five years, the Vikings had taken Northumbria and East Anglia. Ethelred fought four major battles against the invaders before his death in 871.

### ALFRED THE GREAT (849-899)

Alfred was the youngest son of King Ethelwulf, and brother to King Ethelred. After escaping an attack at Chippenham, Alfred rallied the men of the South West and led them to victory at the Battle of Edington. He also repelled further attacks, and was responsible for reforming the English military.

### EDWARD THE ELDER (874-877)

Edward isn't remembered in the same terms as his father, Alfred the Great, but his achievements are no less impressive. He defeated Guthrum, successfully conquered lands occupied by the Danes and extended Wessex's control over the whole of Mercia, East Anglia and Essex.



### GUTHRUM (DIED 890)

One of the chieftain leaders of the great Danish invasion of 865, Guthrum fought a prolonged campaign against Alfred the Great and led the attack on Chippenham. He founded the Danelaw and ruled East Anglia as its King. He was defeated by Alfred at the Battle of Edington in 878.

### SWEYN FORKBEARD (960-1014)

Son of Harald Bluetooth, King Sweyn I of Denmark became the first Viking King of England. It's believed he attacked as revenge for the St Brice's Day Massacre in 1002, and that his sister Gunhilde was one of those murdered. He ruled for five weeks until his death in 1014.

### ETHELRED THE UNREADY (968-1016)

With an epithet that translates as "ill-advised" rather than "unprepared", Ethelred was nonetheless one of the weaker elements of Alfred the Great's dynasty. His attempts at buying off the Vikings with Danegeld and the ordering of the St Brice's Day Massacre do little to manage his legacy.

### CNUT THE GREAT (994-1035)

Cnut (also known as Canute), son of Sweyn Forkbeard, became King of England in 1015, and ruled over Denmark, Norway and parts of Sweden. He is famously said to have ordered the waves to hold back – not as a sign of arrogance, however, but to show the weakness of a King compared to God.

### HARALD HARDRADA (1015-1066)

Harald III of Norway attempted to invade England in 1066, but was killed by Harold Godwinson. Harald "hard ruler" Sigurdsson had previously fought the Slavs of Kievan Rus' (Ukraine) and battled alongside the Byzantine Emperor against the Poles.

### HAROLD GODWINSON (1022-1066)

Son of Godwin, Earl of Wessex, Harold succeeded Edward the Confessor to the throne of England. However, his reign was short-lived: after defeating Harald Hardrada at Stamford Bridge, his depleted army fell to William the Conqueror, the Norman descendant of Viking raiders.

A medieval chapel – filled with valuable treasures – is looted by rampaging Vikings

Saxons lost the battle but both Ethelwold and Eohric, the Danish King of East Anglia, were killed, ending Ethelwold's revolt and securing Edward's claim to the throne.

An uneasy peace was forged between Wessex and the Danelaw, but Edward still wanted to rid his land of the Danish invaders, and in 909 he went on the offensive. The combined armies of Wessex and Mercia launched a five-week campaign against the Kingdom of Lindsey, in modern-day Lincolnshire.

## Crushing defeat

Naturally, the Vikings sought revenge and, in 910, the joint Kings of Northumbria – Eowils Ragnarson and Halfdan II – gathered a fleet of ships and sailed an army into the heart of Mercia via the River Severn. Their aim was to strike quickly, inflicting as much damage and collecting as much loot as they could, before returning home. But Edward had met with his allies and their armies gave chase, blocking the Vikings' route to Bridgnorth and their escape to the sea. With no other option, the Danes had to fight. The forces clashed in August at either Tettenhall or three miles away at Wednesbury.

Outnumbered and, according to reports, ambushed from the woods, the battle quickly turned into a slaughter. The Danes suffered huge casualties, including both of their Kings, and the remainder fled the field. This crushing defeat effectively ended any resistance from the northern Danes, and marked the last great raiding army from Denmark.

With Northumbria quelled, Edward and his allies could turn their attention to the Danes in the south. In 917, they stormed the Danish fortress at Tempsford, killing the local King and his Jarls, and by 918 he'd extended the influence of Wessex to the whole of Essex and East Anglia. Edward also gained control over Mercia when he deposed his niece, Aelfwynn. By 920, his military power had also seen the governments of Northumbria and Scotland fall in line.

Edward died in 924 and was succeeded by his son Athelstan, who was crowned King of Wessex and Mercia in 925. To help consolidate his links to the last Danish Kingdom in York, he married his sister to the Norse King Sihtric – who promptly died a year later, giving Athelstan the opportunity to invade. Danes from Dublin attempted to repel the Saxons but were easily repelled, and York was captured. In July of 927, the Kings of Scotland, South Wales and Strathclyde grudgingly accepted Athelstan as their overlord, and he became the first official King of England

**CEMENTING RELATIONS**
TO FORGE AN ALLIANCE, ALFRED MARRIED HIS DAUGHTER ETHELFLAED TO ETHELRED, KING OF THE MERCIANS. AFTER HIS DEATH IN 911, SHE RULED THE REGION FOR SEVEN YEARS

Following the Viking victory at the Battle of Maldon, King Ethelred the Unready is advised to pay off the Vikings rather than continue the fight. This was the first of several such payments, known as Danegeld (Danish tax)

## St Brice's Day Massacre

The next seven years were relatively peaceful, but trouble was brewing up north, with the formation of an alliance between the new Norse King of Dublin, Olaf Guthfrithson, and Constantine of Scotland. Together, they plotted to defeat Athelstan, with the help of Owain of Strathclyde, and they launched a surprise attack in the autumn of 936.

After a few skirmishes, the combined forces of the north met the armies of the south in the summer of 937 at Brunanburh, located on the Wirral Peninsula. Though details are scarce, it's generally regarded as the greatest single battle in Anglo-Saxon history prior to the Battle of Hastings. The encounter was massive by medieval standards, and the Anglo-Saxons emerged victorious, having slain five Kings and seven Earls of the opposing side. Athelstan's victory united the tribes of Anglo-Saxons in Wessex and Mercia, prevented the inexorable march of the Vikings into England, and resulted in the national borders we see today

A period of stability ensued under the rulers of Alfred the Great's dynasty, with England enjoying greater political unification. However, by the reign of Ethelred "the Unready" in the late 10th Century, Danish Vikings were once again embarking on coastal raids, with attacks on Hampshire, Thanet and Cheshire in 980, Devon and Cornwall in 981, and Dorset in 982 Following a six-year hiatus, a large Danish fleet arrived at Folkestone in Kent, and the local Essex men were defeated at the Battle of Maldon in 991.

Despite Ethelred paying a large financial tribute to the Danes – known as Danegeld – the raids resumed in 997, pillaging coastal regions in the South West and South Wales, and moving to the South East in 998 and 999. The raids continued into the 11th Century and, in 1002, Ethelred paid out 24,000 pounds to Vikings on the Isle of Wight to persuade them to leave – a phenomenal amount of money, even by today's standards Another invading army was paid double this amount to leave in 1012.

Sweyn Forkbeard, the King of Denmark and Norway, had been leading raids against England for a decade, but launched a full scale invasion in 1013, with the intention of crowning himself King of England. He was partly motivated by revenge following the St Brice's Day Massacre, in which Ethelred ordered the killing of all the Danes in England. During this gruesome bout of ethnic cleansing, the Danes in Oxford sought solace in St Frithuswith church, only for the locals to burn it and everyone inside.

A combination of poor leadership and weakened defences saw Sweyn – alongside his son, Cnut the Great – sweep through East Anglia and up to the River Humber. Lindsey and Northumbria offered up little resistance, then the Vikings turned south to Oxford and Winchester, and west into London.

With King Ethelred in residence, the Londoners put up a fight, and so Sweyn turned west. But when the western thanes submitted to the Norse King, London soon followed suit. Ethelred and his sons went into exile in Normandy, and Sweyn was declared King of England on Candlemas, February 1014. However, his reign was short lived: he died five weeks later and, though succeeded by his elder

Mary Evans

son Harald II, the Viking fleet proclaimed Cnut their King instead.

The nobles of England took a dim view of this and recalled Ethelred, who led an army against the new King. Cnut fled to Denmark but soon set about building an army to invade England afresh. In 1015, a Viking force 10,000-strong set sail in 200 longships, made up of men from all over Scandinavia and bolstered by Cnut's allies from Poland

## Power struggle

As expected, Cnut's campaign was swift and vicious. Wessex capitulated early on and, from there, the Viking army rampaged across England, first occupying Northumbria and then turning its attention to a siege of London in 1016. A number of battles were fought, led by Edmund Ironside, Ethelred's successor, but a decisive defeat at the Battle of Assandun (somewhere in Essex) forced Edmund to negotiate for peace. Within weeks, the Saxon King was dead and so, in accordance with the terms of the treaty, Cnut assumed power over Edmund's territories. He was proclaimed King of all England, and ruled for 19 years until his death in 1035.

English sovereignty stayed in Danish hands through Cnut's sons, Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut (Canute III). On Harthacnut's demise in 1042, the throne passed back into Saxon hands, in the shape of Edward III "the Confessor", son of Ethelred the Unready. Edward's reign lasted for 24 years and – apart from a crisis in 1050-1052, when he nearly went to war with Godwin, Earl of Wessex – it was a time of comparative stability.

Edward fell into a coma and died on 5 January 1066, leaving a power struggle in his wake. The throne was contested by Harald III Hardrada, King of Norway, and the heir designate, William II, Duke of Normandy. However, opposition to the increasing influence of the Normans meant that it was instead given to Harold, son of Godwin (hence Godwinson).

Harald of Norway immediately amassed a fleet of 300 ships, which, in September, landed around 8,000 troops on English soil at the mouth of the Tyne. There, they were joined by Flemish mercenaries and Scottish soldiers

The combined Viking army peacefully captured York and defeated a hastily formed English army at the Battle of Fulford. On 25 September, a force of some 6,000 men moved to Stamford Bridge, where they were awaiting supplies Harold's army had been in the south, expecting an attack by William II, but on hearing of the invasion, they raced from London, covering the 185-mile journey in just four days

Not only did Harold take the Vikings by surprise, but the warm weather had prompted them to leave their armour and heavy weapons behind. The force was also split in two, with a small contingent on the west bank of River Derwent, and the bulk of the army on the opposite side

The smaller force was initially engaged and wiped out, by which time the rest of the English army had arrived. To get to the other group, Harold and his men were forced to cross a narrow bridge, which – according to legend – was held up by a huge Norse axeman. The warrior allegedly cut down 40 men before a soldier floated across the river in a barrel, and forced a spear up between the laths in the bridge, mortally wounding the Viking.

The remainder of the force regrouped and formed a shield wall in the shape of a triangle to present a narrow front. Harold's army battered against this in a hand-to-hand battle that lasted all day. Although the Norsemen put up a stern defence, without their heavy weaponry the field was lost. As the group fragmented, the men were outflanked and overwhelmed. The battle rapidly turned into a rout and the Vikings were chased all the way back to their ships moored in Riccall. Harald was killed and of the 300 longships that had borne the army, only 24 were needed to ferry the survivors home.

**In 1015, a Viking force 10,000-strong set sail in 200 longships, made up of men from all over Scandinavia**

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The remaining Vikings in York accepted a truce and were allowed to leave on the condition that they never attacked England again. After 400 years, the threat from Viking invasion had finally come to an end. But in a final twist, the Scandinavians still had their say three days later, William the Conqueror invaded England, landing on the south coast. Then, just three weeks after Stamford Bridge, on 14 October, Harold and his depleted army faced the might of the Normans at the Battle of Hastings.

William's force of around 10,000 men consisted of infantry, cavalry and archers, where Harold's army of 7,000 was largely footsoldiers. The English were outnumbered, outgunned and, with William employing much more sophisticated battle tactics, outclassed. Despite fighting for an entire day, the English eventually succumbed. Harold was killed – reportedly by an arrow to the eye, which penetrated his brain – and the English lost as many as 4,000 men to the Normans' 2,000.

William captured the surrounding area before marching on London and, once the remaining English leaders had surrendered, was crowned King of England on 25 December 1066. The Viking age may have ended, but the country was now under the control of the Normans, themselves the descendants of Norsemen who had invaded northern Europe in the 8th and 9th Centuries.

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# ACE IN THE PACK

**First World War:** Described as "a young knight of gentle manners", air ace Albert Ball typified the spirit and courage of Britain's wide-eyed warriors, who answered their country's call and paid the ultimate price. Steve Jarratt finds out more

THERE WERE TWO WARS BEING WAGED in northern France and Belgium at the start of the 20th Century. One was a bleak and muddy battle of attrition, fought and lost by millions of largely anonymous men and boys. The other was played out in the skies high above by a mere handful of pilots whose adventures made them household names. One such individual was Albert Ball, whose prominent background, unusual character traits and youthful exuberance combined to produce one of the finest British pilots of the First World War.

Ball was born on 16 August 1896 in Nottingham. His father, also called Albert, was a director of the Austin Motor Company, and would go on to become the Lord Mayor of Nottingham and earn a knighthood. Albert junior was joined by a brother, Cyril, and a sister, Lois.

Young Albert did not want for much; his parents encouraged his curiosity in all things mechanical and electrical by providing him with a shed in which to tinker with engines and radio receivers. He was also something of a crack shot, and his father indulged his interest in firearms with target practice in the family garden.

Albert junior was shy and, at school, not much of a team player, but he was viewed as fair with a sense of honour. He was only moderately academically gifted, but his enthusiasm for engineering ensured him a place at Trent College, Long Eaton, in January 1911. During this time, he also served in the Officers Training Corps, a section of the Territorial Army that provided military-leadership tuition to students. Three years later, aged 17, he left college and his father helped him set up his own business, a small electrical and brass-founding concern next door to the house where he was born.

This quiet and religious young man would have enjoyed the trappings of his family's wealth, and no doubt had a successful career ahead of him. But like so many others, his path – which had seemingly been set in stone – would be diverted by events in Europe.

At the outbreak of war, Ball enlisted and, on 21 September, joined the 2/7th (Robin Hood) Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Regiment) as a Private. Army life clearly suited him, as he was promoted to Sergeant two months later and then gained a commission as a Second-Lieutenant, due in part to his officer training. Like most young men of the time, he was patriotic and eager for action, but he was instead assigned to help recruits prepare for the frontline.

Convinced that the war would be over before he'd had a chance to get involved, the young man decided to apply his enthusiasm for cycling, and transferred to the mounted troops of the North Midlands Divisional Cyclists Company. However, this proved to be a poor move, as many of these territorial units served out the entire war in the UK as reserves and, as the war became literally bogged down, their presence was deemed ineffective. In February, Ball wrote to his parents saying, "I have just sent five boys to France, and I hear that they will be in the firing line on Monday. It is just my luck to be unable to go."

## Crash landings

In June, he was packed off to Penvale in Middlesex for platoon-officer training and, as luck would have it, Hendon Aerodrome was just four miles away. So, partly to assuage his fascination with mechanics, and with hopes of joining the newly formed Royal Flying Corps (RFC), Ball signed up for private lessons at the Ruffy-Baumann School of Flying.

His prosperous upbringing undoubtedly played its part here, as lessons were around £75-£100 – which equates to several thousands of pounds in modern currency. It's unlikely that Ball would have been able to afford this without the help of his family.

To fit flying school in with his Army duties, he would jump on his Harley-Davidson motorcycle at 3am, returning to base by 6.45am to begin "the real work of the day". But despite his enthusiasm and dedication, his tutors never considered Ball to be anything but an average pilot, and it took him four months to earn the licence he needed to join the RFC. On 15 October, he received Royal Aero Club certificate number 1898.

Armed with his vital paperwork, Ball requested a transfer and was seconded as a probationary pilot to 11 (Reserve) Squadron, based at Mousehold Heath Aerodrome in Norwich. However, the poor winter weather meant that he didn't actually fly very much. He was given an opportunity to go to France as an observer in a Vickers F.B 5 two-seater, but it would mean giving up his pilot training. Tempting as it was, Ball declined due to the huge amount he'd already spent in order to gain his certificate.

His time at Mousehold wasn't particularly auspicious – he suffered three crash landings, including one from 800 feet – but he survived and, in December of that year, began a stint at the Central Flying School in Upavon, Wiltshire. Then, on 22 January 1916, he was given his pilot's brevet – he had finally earned his wings, and was posted to 22 Squadron at Gosport in Hampshire, where he briefly trained student pilots.

It's interesting to note the 19-year-old's dispassionate approach to accidents. While training at Ruffy-Baumann, he wrote to his parents, saying, "Yesterday, a ripping boy had a smash and when we got up to him, he was nearly dead. He had a two-inch piece of wood right through his head, and he died this morning." He followed this passage with a cheery, "If you would like a flight, I should be pleased to take you any time you wish."

Then, in another letter home while at Gosport, he stated, "We have had another crash. The pilot lost his head when up 1,500 feet, so you bet it has been a good smash."

Ball poses in his Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5 biplane. It was while flying one of these that he lost his life in May 1917

Mary Evans

This apparent emotional detachment undoubtedly served him well in the heat of battle. He approached his duties with a youthful zeal, and the thought of an early demise seemingly held no fear for him. Indeed, on his 16th birthday, he is reported to have climbed a tall factory chimney stack, strolling around on its top without any concerns for his safety

## Shot to pieces

On 18 February 1916, Ball's dreams were realised when he was sent to join the RFC's 13 Squadron, which was based temporarily at Marieux in the Somme area of northern France. At first, he was assigned to a Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2c biplane, a slow but stable two-seater that allowed its crew to undertake reconnaissance duties, mapping enemy movements and spotting for the artillery

Initially, Squadron Commander Major A.C.E. Marsh was unimpressed with the new recruit, and threatened to send him back to England for further training. However, shortly afterwards, Ball was out on a reconnaissance mission with five other B.E.2cs when they were attacked by German fighters. One of the B.E.2cs was lost, while Ball's plane began to misfire and was forced to land. Calling on his mechanical nous, he worked all night to fix the problem and duly took off the next day, only to run into a snowstorm, resulting in a forced landing. When the young man eventually reached Le Hameau the next morning, Major Marsh was so impressed, he decided to keep him on.

Ball's first real taste of combat took place in March, during an artillery-spotting sortie between Vimy and Givenchy. His keen eyesight spotted a German aircraft at 5,000 feet several miles away. He dived to the attack and his observer, Lieutenant S.A. Villiers, opened fire with the plane's Lewis machine gun, emptying a drum and a half of ammo (around 150 rounds) before being driven off by another German plane.

Ball was dutiful in his reconnaissance role, but much preferred the challenge of taking on the enemy and would often ask for longer flights in the hope of finding suitable targets. Also, the ponderous B.E.2c was ill-suited to combat, so he continually asked Major Marsh for permission to fly the squadron's single-seat Bristol Scout. Another pilot wrote off the plane and a replacement was ordered, but when Ball flew the new aircraft over enemy lines in order to test fire his guns, he found that they weren't synchronised and nearly severed the propeller!

**CALLING ON HIS MECHANICAL NOUS, BALL WORKED ALL NIGHT TO FIX THE PROBLEM AND DULY TOOK OFF THE NEXT MORNING**

Over the 11 weeks he spent with 13 Squadron, Ball flew at least 43 operational sorties and had numerous close calls: getting lost and fired at over enemy lines; having his plane shot to pieces during a reconnaissance mission; and suffering a life-threatening crash when his engine failed on take-off.

The young pilot's desire to see action was being fulfilled, but the reality of warfare soon took its toll. In one of his many letters home, he wrote, "I like this job but nerves do not last long, and you soon want a rest." He often requested cakes be sent to him – perhaps as a reminder of home or for comfort eating – and he tried to discourage his younger brother, Cyril, from following him into the RFC.

Ball's skill, daring and aggression in the cockpit was quickly recognised, and he was transferred to 11 Squadron in Arras on 7 May 1916. There, much to his delight, he finally gained access to a number of different fighters, including Bristol Scouts, Royal Aircraft Factory F.E.2b "pushers" and French Nieuport Scouts

Citing a lack of hygiene in his billet in the nearby village, he instead opted to live in a tent on the airfield. This was then upgraded to a wooden hut, which he built next to the hangar, complete with its own small vegetable garden. These unorthodox living quarters served two purposes: Ball was immediately on hand to jump into his plane at the first sign of enemy activity, and it suited him to be away from the other members of his squadron. He would spend his evenings tending to his plot or playing the violin.

His reputation as an introvert continued in the air, where he stalked his prey as a "lone wolf". He quickly opened his account, with his first kill coming on the morning of 16 May, when, flying Bristol Scout 5512 over Beaumont, he shot down a German reconnaissance plane.

He soon switched to the nimble Nieuport Scout, and immediately set about modifying his plane – number 5173 – to better fit his needs ▶

as a fighter pilot. He also began formulating his own tactics; with this type of warfare in its infancy, there were no generally adopted techniques or training manuals to hand, so pilots had to devise their own.

The Nieuport was equipped with a Lewis machine gun on its upper wing, facing forward and firing above the propeller. But a curved mounting, devised by a Sergeant Foster of 11 Squadron, allowed the gun to be tilted back to almost vertical. Ball found that the best method of attack was to pull in behind a flight of enemy aircraft and attack the last one in the formation. He would drop down beneath the enemy and fire up into the belly of the plane – this raking fire would sever the control wires, hit the pilot or take out the fuel tank and engine. He summarised his approach as "manoeuvre for the other man's blind spot, hold your fire until you are on the point of colliding and then hose him". Ball became so proficient at this that he could rapidly reload the Lewis while working the plane's control stick between his knees.

On 29 May, he shot down two LVG C-type reconnaissance aircraft in his newly modified Nieuport, and followed it up two days later with a Fokker E type. Indeed, such was his eagerness for the fight, he cheekily circled a German airfield until two pilots took up the challenge. Both were forced down, whereupon the Englishman claimed one of them as his fourth kill.

A team of German boxers pay tribute to Ball with a Nazi salute at his memorial in the grounds of Nottingham Castle, October 1936

## Phosphorous bombs

Ball's eagerness for combat often saw him run to his machine in his pyjamas and an overcoat in order to get airborne as soon as possible, and he would attack irrespective of the number of enemy planes. In a typically enthusiastic letter home, he described one battle as "a good fight, and the Huns were fine sports. One tried to ram me after he was hit, and only missed by inches."

His derring-do reached new heights when, on 26 June, he destroyed an observation balloon – a tricky target, often heavily defended by anti-aircraft guns and fighters. But shooting it was too easy for the fearless young pilot, who instead attacked with phosphorous bombs – twice.

The next day, the *London Gazette* announced that Ball had been awarded the Military Cross, "for conspicuous skill and gallantry on many occasions, notably when, after failing to destroy an enemy kite balloon with bombs, he returned for a fresh supply, went back and brought it down in flames. He has done great execution among enemy aeroplanes. On one occasion, he attacked six in one fight, forced down two and drove the others off. This occurred several miles over the enemy's lines."

This lifted Ball's spirits and helped to validate the effort he'd spent in the pursuit of his duty. On 1 July, he helped the Army at the Battle of the Somme by flying sorties for 19 hours straight.

**BALL'S EAGERNESS FOR COMBAT OFTEN SAW HIM RUN TO HIS MACHINE IN HIS PYJAMAS AND AN OVERCOAT**

Day by day, his tally grew: on 26 June, he brought down an LFG Roland C.II and an Aviatik C, which were destroyed within 30 minutes of each other. Ball seemed to reconcile his actions with his belief that it was God's will that the enemy be killed. But his conscience still lay heavy at the death that surrounded him. In another letter to his family, he observed that he was "indeed looked after by God but, oh, I do get tired of living always to kill, and am really beginning to feel like a murderer. Shall be pleased when I have finished."

By now, the young man had been on continuous active duty since joining the RFC in February, and he was beginning to feel the strain of combat. He requested a few days' leave but, much to his annoyance, was instead transferred to reconnaissance duties on B.E.2es with 13 Squadron – probably as much to keep him alive as to give him a rest. In the hope of being returned to his beloved fighters, Ball volunteered for the "rotten job" of dropping a spy behind enemy lines. The character in question, known only as "M. Victor", had twice been flown into enemy territory by a Lieutenant Clarke, only to return due to mist and low cloud

Ball and M. Victor took off at 8pm on 26 July, crossing the enemy lines at dusk. The pair successfully dodged a trio of Fokkers as well as anti-aircraft fire, but when Ball landed at the designated location, the agent refused

## Albert Ball's timeline

**1896**

**14 AUGUST**

Ball is born in Nottingham to Albert Ball senior and Harriet Mary Page. His father is a prominent businessman who will go on to become Lord Mayor of Nottingham and earn a knighthood.

**1911**

**JANUARY**

Aged 14, Ball starts attending Trent College in Long Eaton, Derbyshire. He also serves in the Officers Training Corps. He will leave school in December 1913.

**1914**

**21 SEPTEMBER**

After war breaks out, Ball joins the 2/7th (Robin Hood) Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Regiment). He is promoted to Sergeant and gains his commission as a Second Lieutenant, but later transfers to the North Midlands Divisional Cyclists Company.

**1915**

He enrols at the Ruffy-Baumann flying school at Hendon Aerodrome, North London, and gains his Royal Aero Club certificate on 15 October.

**1916**

**22 JANUARY**

Ball receives his "wings" after a stint at the Central Flying School in Upavon, Wiltshire. He joins 22 Squadron in Gosport, Hampshire, three days later.

**18 FEBRUARY**

He is posted to 13 Squadron in Marieux, France. He starts out flying a two-seater Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2c reconnaissance craft, but soon graduates to a single-seat Bristol Scout.

An artist's impression of Ball's last flight, when it is believed that he lost control of his biplane during a dogfight with German aircraft

Mary Evans

to disembark – presumably believing that the unwanted attention had given the game away, and knowing that captured spies were summarily executed. Although frustrated at the unnecessary risk, Ball duly took off and flew home with his spy still on board. However, the mission had the desired effect: recognised for his gallantry, two weeks later, on his 20th birthday, Ball was reunited with 11 Squadron.

He marked his return by being the first RFC pilot to get a "hat-trick" of kills in one sortie, destroying three Roland C.IIs in just 45 minutes on 22 August. Later that day, he fought 14 German fighters behind enemy lines and, with his plane badly damaged, only just managed to limp home. His total kills had risen to 17.

Towards the end of August, Ball was transferred to 60 Squadron at Isle Le Hamem, promoted to full Lieutenant and given command of the squadron's "A Flight". He was allocated a brand-new Nieuport 17 A201 (recognised by a red spinner painted on its propeller), along with his own maintenance crew. And, much to his glee, he was given a "roving, seek-and-destroy-the-enemy" role, effectively *carte blanche* to take to the air whenever he chose.

## National hero

Unsurprisingly, the young pilot was soon back in the firing line. On 31 August, he was observed taking on 12 German Rolands over Cambrai in northern France. He destroyed two before he was hit, cutting the engine ignition leads. Ball had to glide his plane to safety, all the while shooting at the enemy with his Colt pistol. He landed in Colincamps and returned to his base the next day to find that he'd been awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), as well as being granted two weeks' leave.

Arriving home on 5 October, Ball was bemused to find that he'd become a national hero. His dark good looks endeared him to the press, while his increasingly daring exploits had made him a household name and a symbol of hope.

He made a brief return to the front, but was then given a month's leave and a posting to the RFC's 34 (Reserve) Squadron on instructional duties. He would remain in England until February 1917. During this time, a Bar was added to his DSO, and he was awarded the Russian Order of St George (4th Class). On 18 November, he received his medals from King George V at Buckingham Palace, along with another Bar, the *London Gazette* citing that ▶

## 1917

**7 MAY**
Recognised for his skill and daring, Ball is transferred to 11 Squadron, gaining access to a number of different fighters.

**15 MAY**
He scores his first aerial victory in Bristol Scout 5512, shooting down a German Albatros C-type reconnaissance plane over Beaumont, France.

**25 JUNE**
By downing an observation balloon with phosphorous bombs, Ball gains the monikers "balloon buster" and "ace". He is also awarded the Military Cross.

**7 AUGUST**
Ball achieves a "hat-trick" of three kills in one sortie – the first RFC pilot to do so. He joins 60 Squadron the next day and by the end of the month, his tally stands at 17.

**? APRIL**
Following a break from service (during which he is made an Honorary Freeman of Nottingham and becomes engaged to his sweetheart, Flora Young), Ball returns to action on the Western Front with 56 Squadron.

**? MAY**
During a dogfight with German planes from Jasta 11 (whose pilots include Lothar von Richthofen, younger brother of "the Red Baron", Manfred), Ball loses control of his S.E.5 and plummets to his death.

# FOR VALOUR
*Unsung heroes*

# 56 SQUADRON

Albert Ball (seated second right) may be the best-known of the pilots on 56 Squadron's list of alumni, but he was certainly no exception in being exceptional. Indeed, the squadron was one of the most successful in British aviation history, scoring 402 victories between 1916 (when it was formed) and the end of the First World War in 1918.

First posted to the Western Front in April 1917, the squadron was equipped with brand-new S.E.5 fighters and a number of highly experienced pilots – among them Richard Maybery, Harold Balfour-Linn, Gerald Constable Maxwell and, of course, Albert Ball. And so impressed were the Germans with the strength of the foe that faced them, they were convinced that the squadron had been set up specifically to defeat "the Red Baron", Manfred von Richthofen (while the squadron isn't credited with the death of the legendary German pilot in April 1918, it did shoot down his cousin, Werner Voss, during an epic dogfight in September 1917).

The squadron was disbanded and reformed several times between the two World Wars. In the second of these conflicts, its first action came at the Battle of France in the summer of 1940, where – now equipped with the Hawker Hurricane – its responsibilities included covering the Dunkirk evacuation (codenamed Operation Dynamo). That year, it also featured heavily in the Battle of Britain, where, during one five-day sequence of engagements, 11 of its planes were downed. But its successes far outweighed its losses: graduating to the Hawker Tempest in 1944, the squadron would go on to shoot down a total of 149 planes during the war, and was also the joint-highest-scoring Tempest unit, with 59 victories – equal to 486 (NZ) Squadron.

56 Squadron continued to provide an invaluable service throughout the Cold War years, during which it patrolled UK airspace with planes including the Gloster Meteor FIII (the RAF's first jet fighter), the Supermarine Swift, the English Electric Lightning F1A and the McDonnell Douglas Phantom FGR-2. In 2008, the squadron was merged with 43 Squadron, effectively consigning it to the history books. But what a history!

...ors of his team ... Ball ... 1916

Getty Images

he had "attacked three hostile machines and brought one down, displaying great courage. He brought down eight hostile machines in a short period and forced many others to land."

As expected, Ball's posting as a flying instructor was not to his liking: not only did it go against his desire for combat, but it probably sat uncomfortably with his introverted personality. After much badgering of influential seniority, he was eventually posted to a new unit. 56 Squadron, based in Vert Galant, had been set up to develop the art of aerial teamwork to better compete with German formations. He arrived on 7 April, and records indicate that the plan was to have him at the front for just one month to provide inspiration and guidance for the less-experienced pilots.

Although Ball was keen to return to action, his brother Cyril believed it was a mistake.

**BALL WAS LAST SEEN CHASING VON RICHTHOFEN'S ALBATROS INTO THICK CLOUDS. IT'S NOT CLEAR WHAT HAPPENED NEXT**

"It was obvious that he was suffering from battle fatigue," he stated in an interview in 1961. "He should never have gone back to France in April 1917. He may have looked alright, but he was mentally and physically spent."

With his new posting came a new fighter plane – a Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5, designation A4850. Although other pilots took to the fighter, Ball hated it. In a letter to his brother, he stated, "The Hun RFC is far ahead of us this time – in fact, by about 30mph. Oh, I do wish I had got a Nieuport. The S.E.5 has turned out a dud." In order to improve the machine, he stripped off anything he could to lose weight and drag, including one of the guns.

On 7 May, Ball led 11 aircraft on a mission to locate and destroy German planes over Arras. Flying near the French commune of Douai, they engaged with fighters from Jagdstaffel 11, led by Lothar von Richthofen, who had been handed command while his brother – "the Red Baron" Manfred von Richthofen – was on leave.

After a series of dogfights, the British had taken heavy casualties and the planes were scattered due to the poor conditions. Ball was last seen chasing von Richthofen's red Albatros D.III into thick clouds, but it's not clear what happened next: German eyewitnesses claim that Ball's plane emerged flying upside down, pouring smoke with a dead propeller, then crashed near a ruined farmhouse. Von Richthofen had also been forced to land with a ruptured fuel tank.

A young French girl, Cecille Deloffre, ran to the S.E.5 and pulled Ball from the wreckage. He was alive and opened his eyes briefly, but died shortly after. A German doctor noted that his injuries were consistent with the crash: a broken back and arm, a crushed chest and a fractured leg and foot – no bullet wounds were found. The Germans then buried Ball with full military honours at Annoeullin, his grave marked with a single white cross. The British only heard of his demise when German planes dropped messages alerting them to the fact.

Ball's death courted controversy: initially, von Richthofen was credited with bringing him down; however, records show that the German pilot was on sick leave that day, and his claims of shooting down a triplane fighter don't tally with the fact that Ball had been flying an S.E.5 biplane. There was also a theory that Ball had been shot by a machine-gun battery located in a clock tower in Annoeullin, which he often flew past to check the time – but there were no signs of combat damage on his plane. In fact, all the evidence suggests that the Englishman became disoriented in the thick cloud, without altimeter or attitude indicators, and emerged upside down without the time or height to right himself.

Ball's career had spanned just 15 months, yet he had notched up 44 kills and at the time of his death was Britain's leading air ace. His death was a source of national mourning and he was posthumously promoted to Captain and awarded the Victoria Cross for the 26 combats he had taken part in during the spring of 1917. The President of France then appointed him a Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur.

After the war, Ball's father visited the location of his son's death and purchased the field in which he had crashed. Albert senior installed a marble stone to replace the makeshift memorial created by 207 Squadron in 1919, and set up a fund for its maintenance that runs to this day.

Getty Images

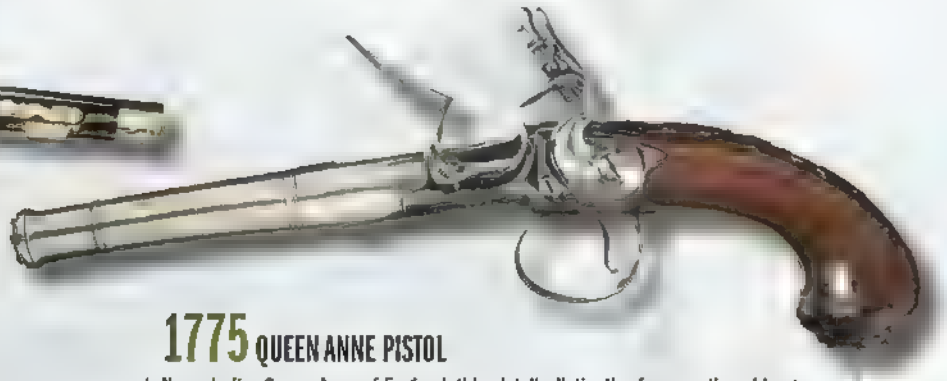
*Military* MILESTONES

# PISTOLS

Nothing changed warfare as much as the invention of the firearm, and the pistol delivered **the ability to kill at medium range**, yet remained as personal as a prized sword. Chris Short traces the lineage of the handgun...

## GERMAN WHEELLOCK

The German wheellock was a revolutionary design in weaponry – not so much for its abilities as a gun, but more for the fact that it was the first true "handgun", where its small size meant it could be carried under one's coat discreetly. The original wheellock was created by Johann Kiefuss of Nuremberg in 1517, and worked by way of friction, where a roughened wheel turning with an iron pyrite flint pressed against it, creating a spark that lit the powder in the flash pan. By 1620, the Germans had improved its design with stronger, more durable springs. The gun was in common use throughout Germany until the late 17th Century but, as a result of its hefty price tag, only the rich could afford it.



## 1775 QUEEN ANNE PISTOL

Named after Queen Anne of England, this pistol's distinctive form continued long after her death in 1714. The distinguishing features were a tapered "cannon" barrel that screwed into a standing breech, in which the lock plate, trigger plate and butt strap were all forged into one piece. The barrel could be unscrewed for easier reloading – hence the gun's nickname of "turn-off pistol" – and it was often rifled, which gave it much greater accuracy. Popular throughout England, the Queen Anne didn't garner much enthusiasm elsewhere, although a large number were used by forces during the American Revolution of 1765-83. The pirate Blackbeard is said to have favoured the gun, and it was also popular among civilians, who could conceal it in their coat pockets.

1600 1640 1660 1680 1700 1720 1740 1760 1780 1800 1820 1840

## 1650 ENGLISH FLINTLOCK

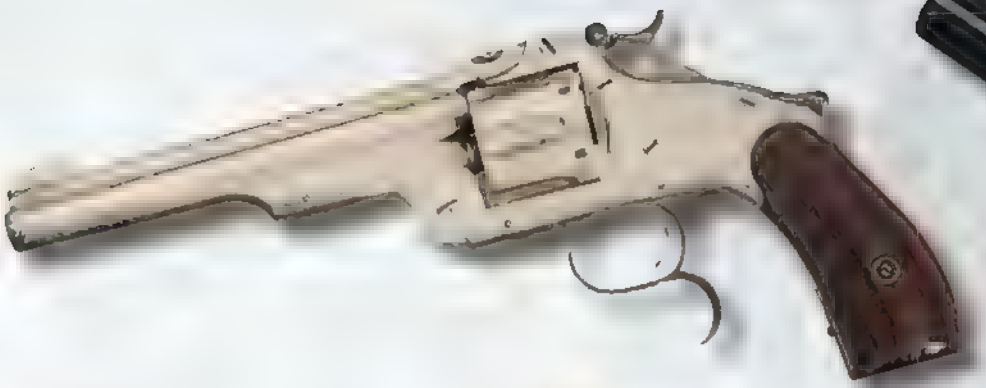
Due to the cost of the wheellock, and because it wasn't a mass-market product, a solution was found in the shape of a new lock system, which used a struck flint as the means of powder ignition. Unfortunately, this created sparks from the top and sides of the gun, but it was also prone to other common problems, including misfires. The 25-bore English Flintlock's design was actually French-inspired, as English gunmakers were still imitating their continental peers at the time. The gun was commonly used until the mid-19th Century but is still produced by manufacturers including Pedersoli and Euroarms, for re-enactments and hunting.

## 1730 WILSON PISTOL

Robert Wilson was a maker of fine pistols and firearms. As one of the largest gunmaking firms in London in the 18th Century, his company became known as "the gunmakers to the Empire", with his weapons being highly sought-after and heavily imported to colonial America. His 5.5-inch barrel, .596-calibre Flintlock pistol was adorned with fantastic gold and feather details, and tended to be used for duelling. As a result, the gun would often be purchased in pairs, where the twin pistols would arrive together in an embellished box. Again, this was a firearm that most could not afford, but English highwayman and thief Dick Turpin was reported to have used it.

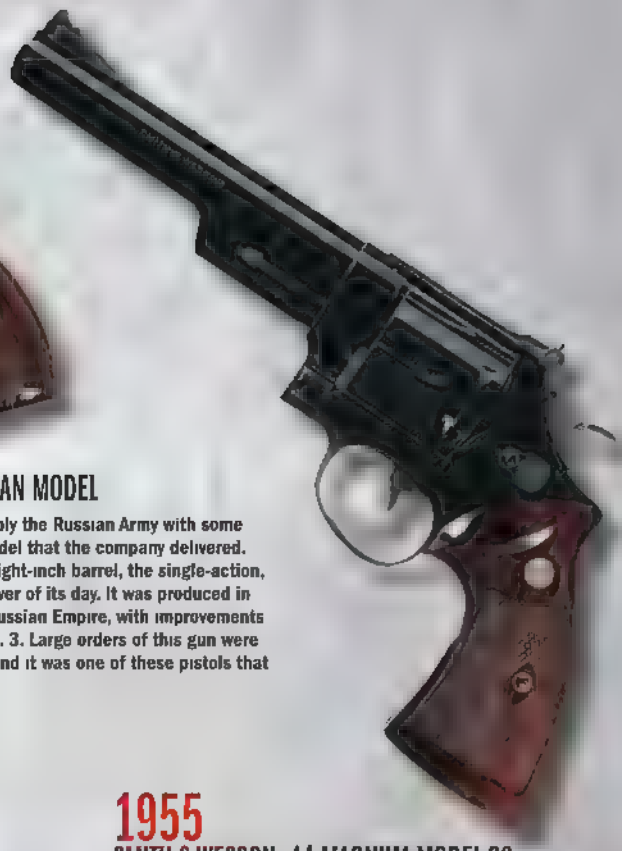
## 1785 BLUNDERBUSS PISTOL

Derived from the Dutch word *donderbus*, or "thunder gun", the Blunderbuss was a close-range weapon designed by John Waters of Birmingham. Its wide muzzle may have helped to intimidate opponents but it didn't, as is widely believed, cause a spread of fire, thus giving its operator a greater chance of hitting their target. Instead, the wide opening was merely there to facilitate loading the barrel with powder and ammunition. Often fitted with spring bayonets for extra protection, the Blunderbuss fired a charge of small lead balls called shot, and was carried by British Navy officers, who would often use it during boarding operations as a precaution. With a 7.5-inch barrel, it was one of the longer Flintlock pistols of its day.



## 1830 BELGIAN DUELLING PISTOL

This was one of the first percussion-cap pistols – a derivative of the Flintlock design – and it revolutionised the firearms industry. The Belgian duelling pistol used impact-detonated priming powder to ignite its main charge, which reduced the time between releasing the hammer and the gun being fired. It also meant that the pistol could be shot in any weather conditions, with no fear of moisture or precipitation affecting its ability. With a fore-sight for greater aiming, the Belgian duelling pistol was a very reliable weapon and a set of these hanging in the home became something of a status symbol.



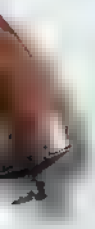
## 1871 SMITH & WESSON NO. 3 RUSSIAN MODEL

In 1870, Smith & Wesson won a contract to supply the Russian Army with some 20,000 pistols, and it was the No. 3 Russian Model that the company delivered. A beautifully crafted .44-calibre pistol with an eight-inch barrel, the single-action, cartridge-firing gun was the most accurate revolver of its day. It was produced in three different designs by special order of the Russian Empire, with improvements made in each one from the first model to the No. 3. Large orders of this gun were also made by the Turkish and Japanese Navies, and it was one of these pistols that killed American outlaw Jesse James in 1882.

## 1955
## SMITH & WESSON .44 MAGNUM MODEL 29

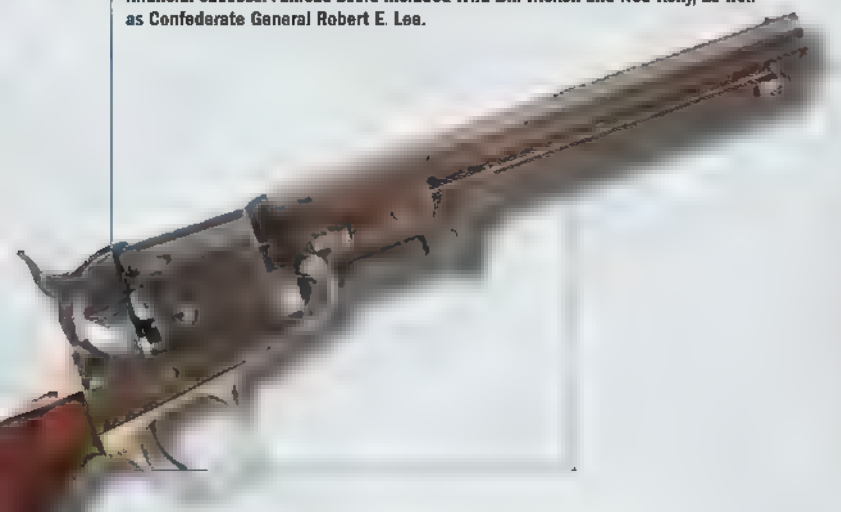
One of the most famous guns ever designed, the Model 29 became an icon after it appeared in the 1971 film *Dirty Harry*, Clint Eastwood's character claiming that it was the most powerful handgun in the world. First introduced in 1955, at its prime this was the most sought-after of all revolvers, designed specifically for shooting heavy loads (up to 340 grains/22 gramme bullets). The six-shot, double-action gun had an 8.25-inch barrel and a .44 Magnum calibre with adjustable rear sights. And such has been its popularity, it's still in production today.

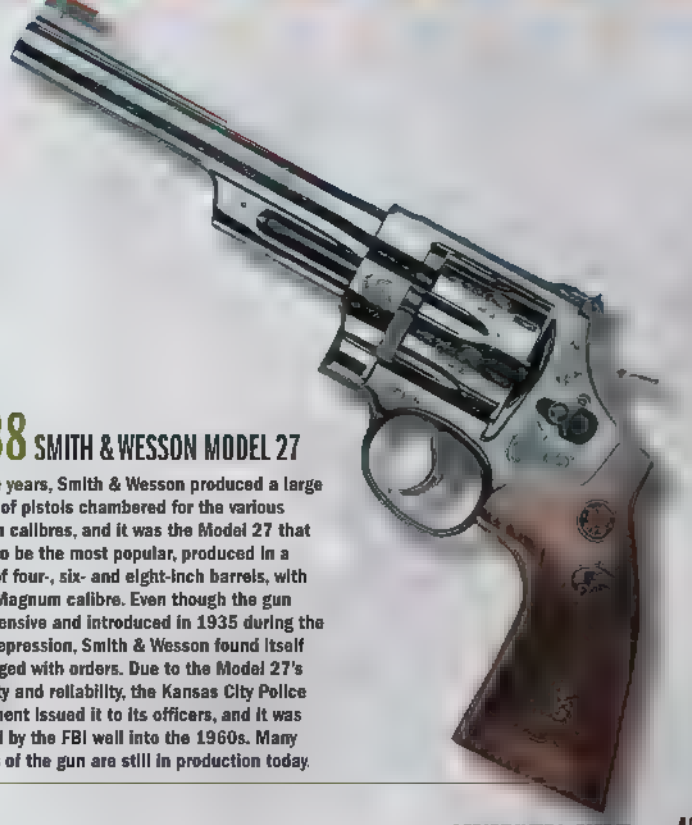
1860 1880 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000



## 1851 COLT NAVY MODEL

A heavyweight in firearms manufacture, Colt is still going strong today. Its Navy Model was designed by Samuel Colt between 1847 and 1850 as an alternative to the Colt Dragoon Revolvers, which were much longer and heavier. One of the new, revolutionary percussion-cap guns, the Navy Model could eject a bullet at 700 feet per second from its .36-calibre barrel. Most of the guns produced were purchased by United States Land Forces and used heavily during the American Civil War, although the British Navy also commissioned large orders of the weapon. In total, more than 250,000 were produced, making the gun Colt's first true financial success. Famous users included Wild Bill Hickok and Ned Kelly, as well as Confederate General Robert E. Lee.





## 1938 SMITH & WESSON MODEL 27

Over the years, Smith & Wesson produced a large number of pistols chambered for the various Magnum calibres, and it was the Model 27 that proved to be the most popular, produced in a variety of four-, six- and eight-inch barrels, with a .357 Magnum calibre. Even though the gun was expensive and introduced in 1935 during the Great Depression, Smith & Wesson found itself backlogged with orders. Due to the Model 27's durability and reliability, the Kansas City Police Department issued it to its officers, and it was favoured by the FBI well into the 1960s. Many versions of the gun are still in production today.

# Great Battles

# YOM KIPPUR

**Arab-Israeli Conflict:** The Yom Kippur War of October 1973 ushered in a new era of warfare, with the devastating effects of guided anti-tank missiles raising a question mark over the future of Main Battle Tanks (MBTs) as the principal spearhead of armies. *History Of War* investigates...

THE SEEDS OF THE YOM KIPPUR WAR of 1973 were sown during the Six Day War that had taken place six years earlier in June 1967. In that conflict, Israel had stunned the world with its military brilliance – particularly in its handling of air power and armour – and had vastly expanded its territory to control the whole of Sinai, the West Bank of the River Jordan and the Golan Heights. The conquests fulfilled their intended purpose – to give the State of Israel a protective "buffer zone" in a sea of Arab enemies – but did not bring about peace. The Arab world demanded the withdrawal of Israel from its conquered territories, something Israel would contemplate only if the Arabs acknowledged its sovereignty and right to exist. Neither side's requirements would be satisfied, so Israel established a string of fortified positions along the east bank of the Suez Canal. This was known as the Bar Lev Line, named after Lieutenant-General Chaim Bar Lev, Chief of the General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from 1968 to 1971. Not always adequately manned or protected, the Bar Lev Line became the victim of regular Egyptian artillery bombardment from 8 March 1969 – the beginning of what became known as "the War of Attrition". This conflict would steadily escalate into another full scale showdown between the Arabs and the Israelis.

**DURING THE SIX DAY WAR OF 1967, ISRAEL HAD STUNNED THE WORLD WITH ITS MILITARY BRILLIANCE**

During the Six Day War and until his death in 1970, Egypt was under the leadership of President Gamel Abdel Nasser. Nasser, smarting at the humiliating defeat of 1967, began the job of revitalising his forces. Central to this effort was the expertise and technology of the Soviet Union – Egypt's principal Cold War backer. In particular, Egypt needed solutions to two problems – the Israeli Air Force (IAF) and Israel's armoured formations. To tackle the former problem, the Arabs invested heavily in Soviet SA-2, SA-3, SA-6, SA-7 and SA-9 surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems, as well as the formidable four-barrelled ZSU-23-4 radar controlled self-propelled anti-aircraft cannon. By forging these systems into a tight interlocking ▶

## The facts

**WHO** The combined armies of Egypt and Syria, with some minor allies, against the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

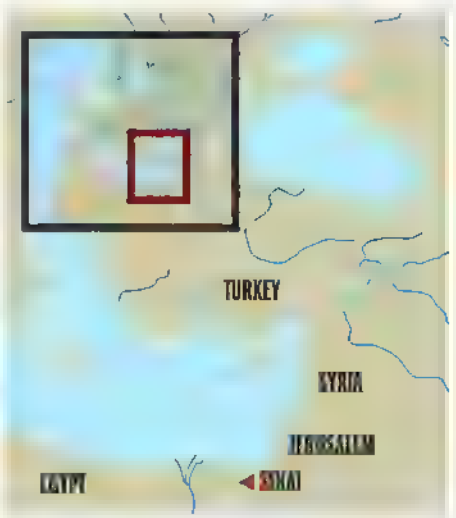
**WHAT** Egypt and Syria launched an assault on Israeli-held territories in Sinai and the Golan Heights, aiming to overwhelm the Israeli defence through a two-front strategy.

**WHERE** Egypt attacked across the Suez Canal into Sinai, while Syria fought in the Golan Heights to the north of Israel

**WHEN** 6-25 October 1973

**WHY** Egypt hoped that the offensive would force Israel to the international negotiating table, where it would be forced to concede territories captured in the 1967 Six Day War.

**OUTCOME** After suffering heavy losses on both fronts, Israel rallied and reversed all the gains made by Egypt and Syria, inflicting massive casualties on the Arab armies before a UN ceasefire was imposed.



Israeli Centurions mass for the attack in the Sinai. One of Israel's greatest mistakes in the Yom Kippur War was its tendency to commit armour without infantry support, resulting in many losses to Egyptian anti-armour teams

### ANTI-TANK WEAPONS

The Soviet Sagger – employed by the Egyptian infantry – fired a missile 800mm (33.9in) in length, either from a suitcase launcher or from rails mounted on an armoured fighting vehicle (AFV) or helicopter. It had a range of up to 3,000 metres (3,281 yards) and guidance was by the Manual Command to Line of Sight (MCLOS) system. This relied on the operator guiding the missile to the target via a joystick – a tricky job. A 3,000-metre (3,281-yard) flight would take up to 30 seconds, during which time enemy gunners could fire at the tell-tale dust cloud generated by the launch and hopefully knock the amateur off aim. Impact rate for the Sagger could be as low as 30 per cent, but with an armour penetration of over 400mm (15.7in), it remained a dangerous weapon.

The RPG-7 was a different animal. This shoulder-launched weapon fired an unguided rocket fitted with a High Explosive Anti-Tank (HEAT) warhead, which had an armour penetration of around 260mm (10.2in) at close range. Being unguided, the RPG-7's PG-7V missile gave it an effective range of up to 500 metres (547 yards), though in combat 100-200 metres (109-219 yards) was more likely. The great virtue of the RPG-7 was, and remains, its ease of use: every soldier trained to the weapon could destroy any of the tanks in the Israeli inventory.

network, the Egyptians aimed to create an SAM "umbrella" that would provide ground forces with relative freedom from IAF ground-attack missions. The different operational altitudes of the various SAM systems meant that an Israeli aircraft's efforts to avoid one type of SAM usually put it within effective range of another.

The problem of Israeli armour was partly answered by re-equipping Arab tank forces – in total, the Soviet Union supplied more than 4,000 tanks to Egypt and Syria in the years between 1967 and 1973; mostly T-55s and T-64s. The other side to Egypt's anti-armour restructuring was to acquire huge supplies of infantry anti-tank weapons. These were the AT-3 Sagger and the now-infamous RPG-7. Each had its own capabilities (see box, left).

The rearmament programme of the Arab armies seemed to put them on a secure footing for a coming war. By October 1973, Israel had around 275,000 soldiers at its disposal (a third of these were regulars, the rest were reserves), some 1,700 tanks and 432 aircraft. Egypt had something like 285,000 men, around 2,000 tanks and 600 aircraft, but its ally Syria added another 100,000 men, 1,200 tanks and 210 aircraft to the Arab arsenal.

## Deception operation

Nasser died in September 1970 and was succeeded as President by Anwar Sadat. Sadat made great efforts on the international stage to secure a diplomatic solution to the Arab-Israeli problem, but by 1971 he felt that war was his only option. Herein lay a problem. Sadat knew that his forces could not match Israeli military professionalism (and that the United States would come to Israel's material aid). His plan, therefore, was to open a multi-front war that was not aimed at crushing Israel but at forcing it and the international community to the negotiating table.

The plan was as follows: Egypt would launch an assault across the Suez Canal, penetrate a short distance into Sinai, then hold the ground while Israeli forces battered themselves against the SAM, anti-tank and infantry defences. A simultaneous attack by Syrian forces in the Golan Heights would stretch the Israeli response thin, preventing it from applying the focused

Blitzkrieg-style warfare it had employed in the Six Day War. The Arab attack would be codenamed Operation Badr. The primary focus of our study here is the Sinai theatre of operations – although this in no way relegates the Golan Heights action to a secondary position.

Under the cloak of a highly effective deception operation, Egypt assembled five infantry, three mechanised and two armoured divisions, plus several other independent brigades, along the Suez Canal in early October 1973. (The timing of the operation was made to coincide with the most favourable tides and weather over the Suez Canal.) The deception operation was designed to make the Israeli high command – headed by Prime Minister Golda Meir and her Minister of Defence, Lieutenant-General Moshe Dayan – believe that the force gathering was mere posturing. Such was the skill of its execution that only 18 of the 32 strongpoints on the Bar-Lev Line were occupied, and by fewer than 500 troops. This relaxed attitude was adopted in spite of the IDF's then Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General David Elazar, having stated his belief that the Arab mobilisation was a definite prelude to a major offensive.

## Remarkable engineering

On 6 October at 2pm, Egyptian artillery sprung into action along the Suez Canal, unleashing up to 10,500 shells in the first 60 seconds alone as the Israeli positions came under fire. Meanwhile, the Egyptian Air Force embarked on heavy ground-attack missions against Israeli air defence and command-and-control centres, although it quickly lost 40 aircraft to Israeli fighters and anti-aircraft fire. Then, at 2.20pm,

**EGYPTIAN ARTILLERY SPRUNG INTO ACTION, UNLEASHING UP TO 10,500 SHELLS IN THE FIRST 60 SECONDS**

the first Egyptian infantry began to swarm across the canal in assault boats. Their way was paved by remarkable combat engineering, the principal challenge of which was cutting through the huge sand berms constructed by the Israelis on their side of the canal. This was accomplished by using the same high-pressure water hoses employed in the construction of the Aswan Dam; the jets of water cut through the berms, and steel matting was laid in the gap to enable armoured vehicles to pass. Huge motorised rafts ferried tanks across the water and, over the next two days, ten massive prefabricated bridges were thrown over the canal to expedite troop and vehicle transfer.

Once the force was across, the Egyptians advanced into Sinai and prepared to face the inevitable Israeli counter attack. Only 208 Egyptian troops were killed during the crossings, and by 7 October around 90,000 troops and 850 tanks were on the eastern side.

## Serious losses

Between 6 and 8 October, as fighting raged around the Bar-Lev strongpoints, the Israelis began to mount their response in earnest. Here they made their first mistakes. Self-belief within the Israeli Armored Corps was extremely high,

Israeli Centurions mass for the attack in the Sinai. One of Israel's greatest mistakes in the Yom Kippur War was its tendency to commit armour without infantry support, resulting in many losses to Egyptian anti-armour teams.

with powerful characters such as Major-General Avraham Mandler (commander of the 252nd Armored Division), Major-General Avraham Adan (162nd Reserve Armored Division), Major-General Ariel Sharon (143rd Reserve Armored Division) and Brigadier-General Kalman Magen (146th Reserve Armored Division) pushing for rapid offensive action. However, the SAM umbrella was already inflicting serious losses on the IAF, and troop mobilisation was taking time, so the armoured forces would largely go into action without the cover of air superiority or large troop movements. Artillery support was also slow in materialising.

## Bloodily repulsed

The result was that the Israeli armour threw itself against the Egyptian defences, mostly in battalion-sized packets, making 23 individual counter attacks between 6 and 8 October. Almost all were bloodily repulsed when they encountered Egypt's anti-tank screen.

The experience of Adan's division was typical. He attacked with his three brigades against the Egyptian Second Army south of El-Qantara, with Sharon's division ordered either to make a follow-up attack against the more southerly Third Army or to move up as a reserve support to Adan if he found himself in trouble. The overall Israeli plan was to sweep along the eastern side of the Suez Canal, breaking up ▶

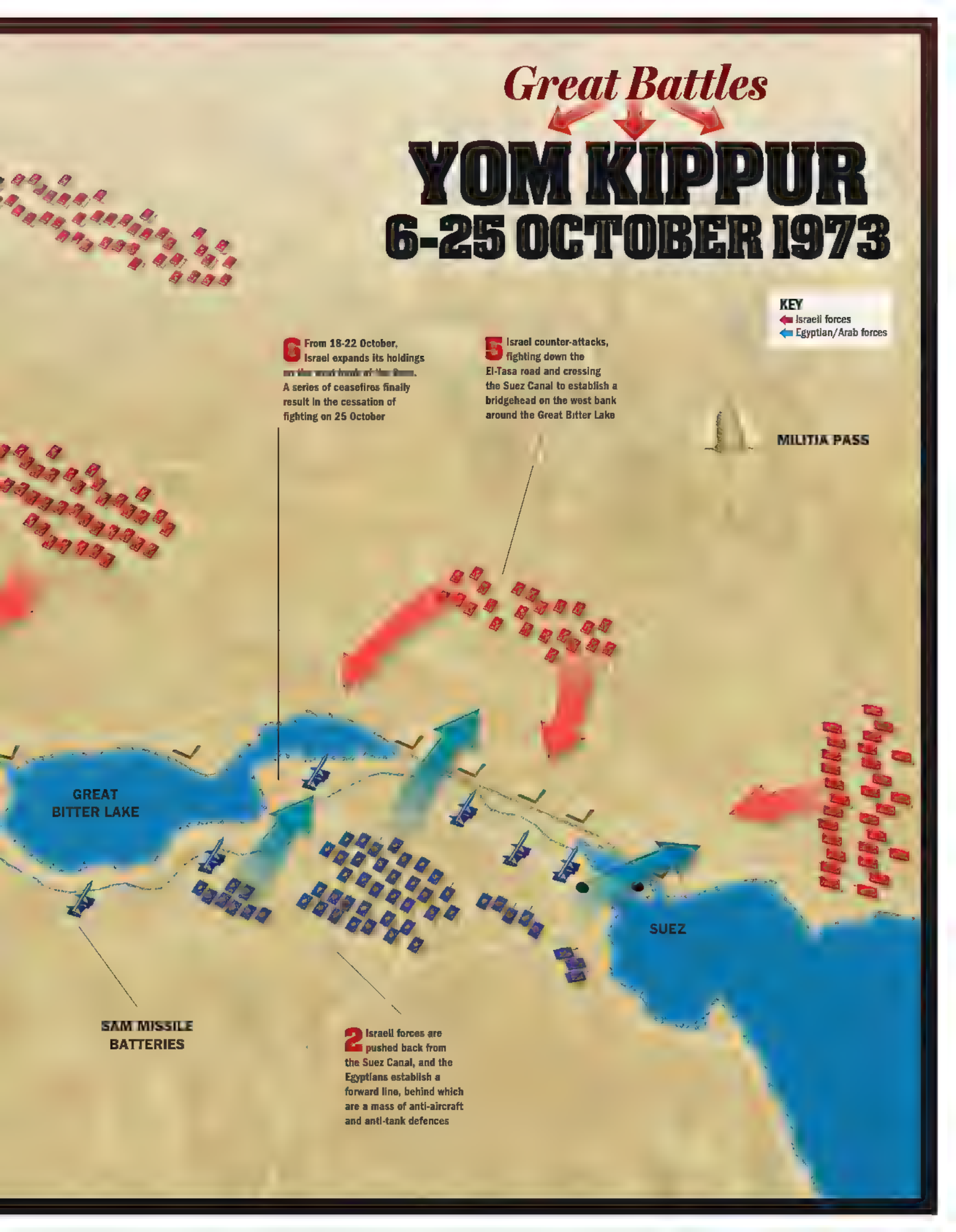
**IDF TANK CREWMAN**

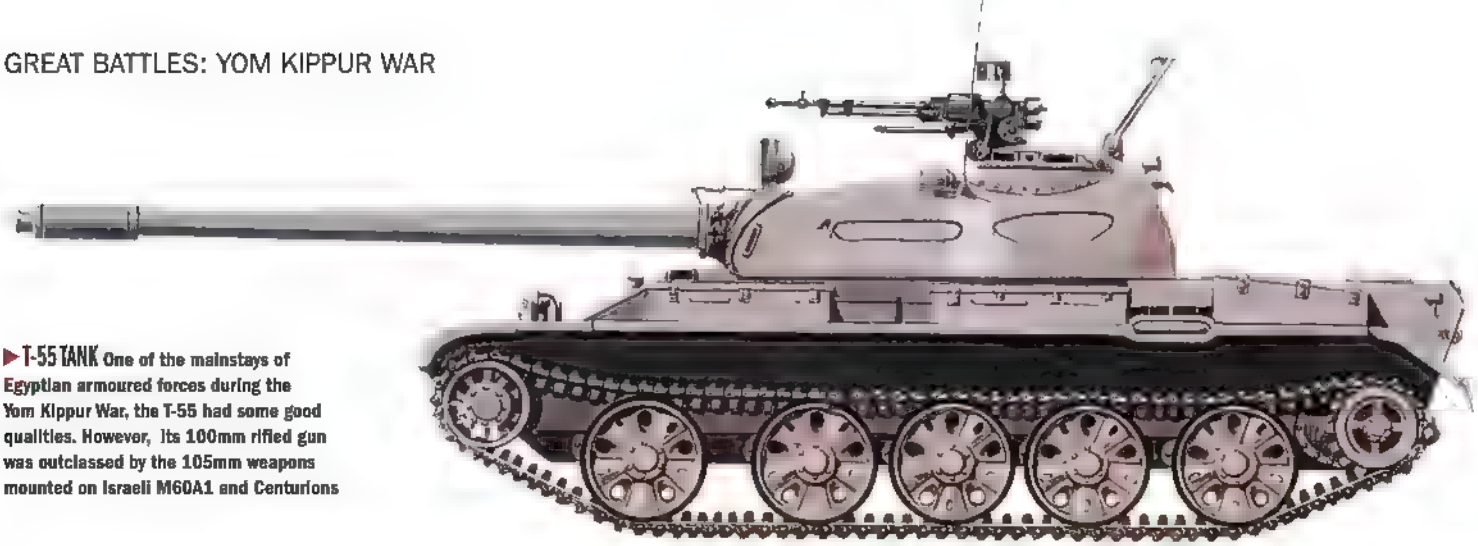
The personnel of the Israeli Armored Corps (IAC) were critical to the eventual defeat of the Arab armies during the Yom Kippur War, but they paid for victory with hundreds of lives – some 400 Israeli tanks were destroyed in the Sinai. This First Lieutenant (his rank is displayed on his collar straps) gives a typical image of an IAC crewman. He wears a fibre helmet drilled through with ventilation holes, a simple, lightweight fatigue uniform and a communications headset (the junction box is suspended over his chest). Israeli forces have long been known for their informality in dress, the emphasis in training being placed on combat effectiveness rather than what some might feel are minor points of military etiquette.

3 Initial Israeli armoured counter-attacks are repulsed by Egyptian RPG and Sagger teams, with Israel suffering heavy losses in tanks and personnel
BAR LEV FORTS
PORT SAID
SUEZ CANAL
EL-QANTARA
ISMAILIA
1 On 6 October 1973, ten Egyptian divisions make an assault crossing of the Suez Canal, following a heavy-artillery bombardment of the Bar-Lev Line
4 14 October: as the Syrian offensive weakens on the Golan Heights, the Egyptian forces launch a huge offensive out into the Sinai. It is a terrible mistake, putting the Egyptians at the mercy of the Israeli Air Force and better-trained Israeli tank crews

*Great Battles*

# YOM KIPPUR
## 6-25 OCTOBER 1973


KEY
Israeli forces
Egyptian/Arab forces
6 From 18-22 October, Israel expands its holdings on the west bank of the Suez. A series of ceasefires finally result in the cessation of fighting on 25 October
5 Israel counter-attacks, fighting down the El-Tasa road and crossing the Suez Canal to establish a bridgehead on the west bank around the Great Bitter Lake
MILITIA PASS
GREAT BITTER LAKE
SUEZ
SAM MISSILE BATTERIES
2 Israeli forces are pushed back from the Suez Canal, and the Egyptians establish a forward line, behind which are a mass of anti-aircraft and anti-tank defences



**▶ T-55 TANK** One of the mainstays of Egyptian armoured forces during the Yom Kippur War, the T-55 had some good qualities. However, its 100mm rifled gun was outclassed by the 105mm weapons mounted on Israeli M60A1 and Centurions

the Egyptian defences in preparation for taking back the territorial losses.

Adan's manoeuvre seemed to be going smoothly, when Egyptian infantry armed with RPG-7s and Saggers suddenly broke their cover from dug-in positions and unleashed dozens of missiles at the Israeli tanks. Twelve tanks were destroyed in quick succession, and more soon followed. One brigade was engaged by the anti-tank units about 1,000 metres (1,094 yards) from the canal, and 18 of its tanks were lost. By 2pm, Adan's entire counter-attack had been smashed, and similar stories were repeated up and down the front.

**An Egyptian infantryman. Most Egyptian equipment was of Soviet origin, hence the AKM assault rifle**

Israeli armoured counter-attacks in the Sinai between 6 and 9 October were disastrous, with the Israelis losing more than 400 tanks destroyed or damaged in this period. Combined with the air losses to the SAM screen, and the stress of the additional fighting on the Golan Heights, a deep depression started to sink over the Israeli forces and their high command.

## Dogged resilience

By the end of 8 October, events seemed to be going in Sadat's favour. Yet the Arab forces would eventually go on to lose the Yom Kippur War through a combination of foolish strategic changes and the dogged resilience of the Israeli troops, who had the added motivation in the Golan of fighting to protect their homeland. The battle for the Golan Heights, which began with a Syrian assault on 6 October, turned into one of the greatest armour-versus-armour battles in history.

The Syrians unleashed some 1,200 tanks against, initially, only two brigades of Israeli armour numbering around 180 tanks, obliterating them by 8 October. Nevertheless, the heroism of the Israeli defenders, plus the steady influx of other Israeli tank and infantry units, began to inflict unsustainable losses on the Syrians and their allies. In three days of fighting on a battlefield only 16 kilometres (10 miles) deep, the Arab forces lost some 1,400 tanks, several other Arab countries – particularly Iraq – having also deployed tank forces in the sector. In one action alone, an Israeli unit of 50 tanks wiped out 200 Syrian tanks near Yehuda. Although fighting in the Golan would rumble on for several more weeks, the Syrians were effectively defeated by 9 October.

Alarmed by such events, Sadat made a fatal decision. It was decided that Egypt would go on the offensive, abandoning its original plans to fight a defensive battle. The decision was a critical mistake on several levels. First, it would force Egyptian units to fight the fast-moving manoeuvre engagements at which the Israelis excelled, and for which the laborious, centralised Egyptian command-and-control was poorly suited. Second, an advance would push the Egyptians out from under their SAM umbrella, where they would suffer the depredations of the IAF. Third, the Israelis were beginning to cope with the anti-tank threat. By pouring machine-gun and mortar fire on enemy anti-tank troops, they could either destroy the anti-tank units or disrupt their aim. Similarly, the IAF began operating in larger formations, overwhelming SAM defences and using US-supplied Walleye guided bombs to destroy launchers and radar systems.

The Egyptian offensive was launched on 14 October, with disastrous results. In only

**Soviet-built Egyptian SA2 anti-aircraft missiles captured by the Israelis on the western bank of the Suez Canal. SA2s provided a high-altitude anti-aircraft "umbrella", under which Egyptian land forces could operate**

two hours, the attack was crushed. Four hundred Egyptian tanks were committed to battle, but 260 of these were destroyed by Israeli tanks and units firing United States TOW anti-tank missiles. Worse still, the failed effort gave an opening for the Israelis to return to the offensive, this time with improved tactics and against a weakened enemy. On the 15th of the month, IDF armoured formations crossed the canal around Deversoir and consolidated a bridgehead, while more units moved across the Great Bitter Lake to the south, using assault boats and pontoon bridges.

By the 17th, the canal was effectively in Israeli hands – so much so that on the 18th, the IDF launched Operation Gazelle, an offensive into the Egyptian interior. Accompanied by extensive air strikes that destroyed 50 Egyptian SAM batteries over four days, three Israeli brigades pushed outwards from the western bridgehead, advancing 56 kilometres (35 miles) by the end of 19 October. Many units of the Egyptian Third Army escaped encirclement

**THE EGYPTIAN OFFENSIVE WAS LAUNCHED ON 14 OCTOBER, WITH DISASTROUS RESULTS**

only by directly disobeying Sadat's orders and pulling out. Nevertheless, the going remained hard for the Israelis, and some of their objectives – such as Suez City – remained in the hands of the defenders.

By now, the international community was pushing hard for a ceasefire, especially when Saudi Arabia stopped oil exports to the United States, which had launched Operation Nickel Grass – a massive resupply operation to Israel during the early stages of the conflict. A ceasefire was finally agreed on 22 October, but it took several more UN Security Council resolutions to bring the fighting to a close on the 25th of the month.

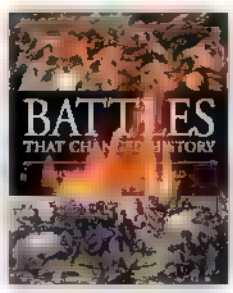
Israeli troops try out a captured Egyptian Carl Gustav anti-tank weapon. The Israeli solution to Egyptian tank hunters was to saturate their positions with small arms and artillery fire, thereby disrupting their ability to aim and manoeuvre

The Yom Kippur War inflicted heavy losses on both the Arab and the Israeli sides. In total, Israel suffered 2,687 dead and 7,251 wounded, while the Egyptian losses alone on the Arab side were in the region of 12,000 dead and another 35,000 wounded. Ironically, both sides declared the action a victory – although the fact that Israel held onto all of its previously acquired territory, and indeed made some additional conquests, does make its claim appear the more plausible of the two. Nevertheless, the 1973 conflict shook the IDF to the core, and it came in for heavy criticism both in terms of its pre-war intelligence and its tactical choices during the war itself. What was apparent was that both armour and air force had to refresh their tactics in the light of new battlefield technology.

Some 107 IAF aircraft and 400 IDF tanks were lost in Sinai, and even though these were in some way offset by the 277 aircraft and 1,000 tanks lost by Egypt, they were still an appalling cost for what was a small armed force.

The Israelis had been totally unprepared for the Egyptian's mass deployment of anti-tank weapons, such as the Sagger and the RPG-7, and these had proved extremely effective against one of the best-equipped professional armies in the world. The Yom Kippur War showed that motivated infantry armed with effective weapons could take on modern armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) and win. Arguably, Israel would never again enjoy the total military confidence it had gained from its 1967 victory, although Yom Kippur spurred the IDF into becoming one of the most technologically advanced forces in the world.

Moshe Dayan (right) was the Israeli Minister of Defence during the Yom Kippur War.




This feature is an edited extract from the book *Battles That Changed History*, published by Amber Books, RRP £24.99. It is available from www.amberbooks.co.uk

# The ART of WAR
# PROPAGANDA POSTERS

In times of war, the battle for hearts and minds is just as important as the fight for territory. Propaganda posters have played a key role in moulding public opinion, driving recruitment and generating funds. In this new series looking at military artwork, we examine some of the best

**▲ STEP INTO YOUR PLACE 1915**

**The fight against the Germans in mainland Europe during the First World War consumed troops at an alarming rate, and Britain was desperate for new recruits. This poster, published by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee in 1915, shows men from all walks of life gradually turning into a column of soldiers. The artist is unknown, but the lithograph was produced by David Allen and Sons of Harrow in Middlesex, which graduated from seaside posters to propaganda during the war.**

▲ **ENLIST 1915**
Possibly the most direct and poignant of all the propaganda posters, this effort from June 1915 was published by the Boston Committee of Public Safety after the sinking of the RMS Lusitania by a German U-boat. The artwork, by Fred Spear, shows a woman passenger and her child sinking beneath the waves. The Lusitania was later discovered to be carrying four million rounds of ammunition, which partially justifies the German attack but fails to diminish the poster's emotional impact.

▲ **SALVAGE SCRAP TO BLAST THE JAP 1941**
Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, anti-Japanese sentiment was encouraged by the use of posters symbolising them as animals, emphasising their underhand and vicious nature. As well as this evil-looking snake, they were depicted as a rat and a shark. This poster, issued by the United States Navy and created by artist Phil von Phul, was part of the scrap-metal drive, where Americans were urged to turn in metal for recycling.

◀ **UND IHR? 1917**
Translated as "And you?", this solemn Austrian poster suggests that if you can't enlist, you should at least help pay for the war effort by subscribing to a War Loan. These Austro-Hungarian loans were issued on a six-monthly rolling basis, starting in November 1914 – hence this poster advertises the seventh such issue. The image was created by noted graphic designer Alfred Roller, who was part of the Viennese Secession alongside architect Josef Hoffman and artist Gustav Klimt. ▶

### ▼ THAT LIBERTY SHALL NOT PERISH FROM THE EARTH 1918

**This striking image by Joseph Pennell was used to promote the purchase of Liberty Bonds towards the end of the First World War. Using the (albeit improbable) threat of invasion by the German air force, it entreated the US public to invest in the war effort, for which the nation required a staggering $6billion. The Pictorial Division of the Committee on Public Information invited illustrators to produce artwork for the campaign, and Pennell submitted this impressionist vision of a ruined New York City.**

### ▶ EVERY GIRL PULLING FOR VICTORY 1918

**Towards the end of the First World War, US President Woodrow Wilson instigated the United War Work campaign to raise $170million for the demobilisation and care of US troops. The drive featured all manner of fundraising and morale-boosting material, and was run like a commercial advertising campaign. This example features artwork by Edward Penfield, known for his *Harper's Magazine* covers. In all, the US public raised $203million, making this campaign the largest fundraiser up to that point.**

**THE DAY OF SAINT GEORGE 1914**
During the First World War, the "Russian Steamroller" did not need to resort to recruitment posters, but it did require public investment in government bonds. This illustration features what appears to be the Patron Saint of England, but Saint George's Day is actually celebrated in many nations across Europe and Asia. The poster celebrates the dedication of the Church of Saint George in Kiev, on 26 November – also known as Yuri's day (Osennly Yuriev Den) – and urges the public to make a donation to the cause.

BRITISH EMPIRE UNION
ONCE A GERMAN – ALWAYS A GERMAN!
1914 TO 1918.
NEVER AGAIN!
REMEMBER!
Every German employed means a British Worker Idle.
Every German article sold means a British article unsold.
BRITISH EMPIRE UNION: 346 STRAND, LONDON, W.C.2

**ONCE A GERMAN, ALWAYS A GERMAN 1919**
Even after the First World War had finished, anti-German feeling was running high among the British public, and this wasn't helped by the exhortation of the British Empire Union to remember the Germans' past atrocities and boycott their products. Illustrator David Wilson placed provocative images of a soldier bayonetting a baby, and being drunk and violent, alongside the same man now dressed as a businessman, eager to trade with the British.

**BRITAIN NEEDS YOU AT ONCE 1915**
This recruiting poster for the First World War was issued by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee as part of a campaign preceding the introduction of conscription in 1916. The imagery calls upon Englishmen to invoke the spirit of Saint George fighting the dragon (although, as mentioned previously, this figure is also celebrated in many other countries, including – ironically – Germany). Sadly, the creator of the artwork remains a mystery, but the poster itself was produced by Spottiswoode and Co Ltd of London.

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Omaha beach at sunrise. This was the scene of one of the worst massacres in military history, as US troops were gunned down by German defences

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*Back to the past*

# "ON THE SANDS OF LIFE, SORROW TREADS HEAVILY"

**Second World War:** With 70 years having passed since D-Day, there's never been a better time to explore the sights and memorials of the Normandy landings. A number of guided tours help you to do exactly that – Paul Dimery journeyed south to find out more...

Take the capacity of London's new Olympic Stadium. Now double it. That's the number of soldiers who took part in the D-Day landings on the beaches of Normandy on 6 June 1944, as the Allies set about recapturing France – and eventually the whole of mainland Europe – from Hitler's forces. In all, around 156,000 men – from Britain, America, Australia, New Zealand, Greece, Norway and many other countries – made the fateful journey from southern Britain to the continent. Most came in an armada of some 5,000 ships and landing craft. Others were flown in by plane and parachuted behind enemy lines. It was the ultimate sacrifice – many of these brave troops didn't stand a chance, with thousands being cut down by German gunfire before they'd even made it off the beaches. But those men didn't die in vain: within weeks of the invasion, France was back in Allied hands, providing the strategic momentum to push further east towards Germany and ultimate victory.

Seventy years have passed since the D-Day landings, but the endeavours of those courageous souls still linger in our hearts and memories. And that promises to be the case for generations to come, thanks to the numerous memorials that have been established in northern France in their honour, from cemeteries and statues to museums and art exhibitions.

To ensure you don't miss any of these key sights, book yourself onto one of the many D-Day tours that have been designed to maximise your appreciation of what happened in Normandy during Operation Overlord (the codename of ▶

The Normandy Tank Museum features some of the vehicles used on D-Day

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the Allies' overall campaign in France during the summer of 1944). One such tour is run by Leger Holidays and includes travel by coach to northern France, followed by either a three- or four-night stay and, of course, a visit to all of the aforementioned sights

## Storm of gliders

The first day proper of the four-night tour (after your journey to France) begins at Pegasus Bridge, the scene of the first actions on D-Day. In the early hours of 6 June, paratroopers of the British Sixth Airborne Division, commanded by Major John Howard, stormed the position from gliders and eventually took control of it, preventing German armour from repelling the Allied invasion at Sword beach. You will see where the gliders landed and also the Gondrée Café – arguably the first house liberated on D-Day and now run by a man who, as a small boy, witnessed Operation Overlord with his own eyes – before visiting the Memorial Pegasus Museum, where the original bridge is located. Then it's on to Ranville, where you will be given the opportunity to pay your respects at a cemetery for airborne troops.

After lunch, the tour takes in the British landing beaches, starting at Sword. Here, you will see the new memorial to D-Day hero "Piper Bill" Millin, who piped Lord Lovat's commandos ashore, and examine the area where men from the Third Division landed. At Juno beach, you will visit the superb Juno Beach Centre, which explores the Canadian role in Operation Overlord. Then it's on to Gold beach, where the British suffered heavy casualties as troops attempted to storm the tough defences at Asnelles. The day ends at Arromanches, where the Allies constructed their temporary Mulberry Harbour to facilitate the unloading of cargo (much of the harbour is still visible out to sea)

**THE RESULT WAS A MASSACRE, WITH HUNDREDS GUNNED DOWN ALMOST AS SOON AS THEY SET FOOT ON THE BEACH**

## Band of Brothers

The second day of the tour focuses on America's part in D-Day. When its troops came ashore at Omaha beach – the toughest of the landing zones, thanks to its rough terrain and stern German defences – the result was a massacre, with hundreds of men gunned down almost as soon as they set foot on the sand. "Bloody Omaha" was immortalised in Steven Spielberg's film *Saving Private Ryan*, but now you can experience the scene for yourself. A poignant memorial to the fallen has been erected here, and equally moving is the Normandy American Cemetery, the final resting place of many of those heroic soldiers

There will be just enough time to visit the Overlord Museum-Omaha Beach before you take lunch in Sainte-Mère Église, and then it's on to the new Richard Winters Leadership Memorial, where you'll hear all about the man who commanded the "Band of Brothers", the ▶

One of many touching tributes to the fallen

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The Overlord Museum-Omaha Beach features

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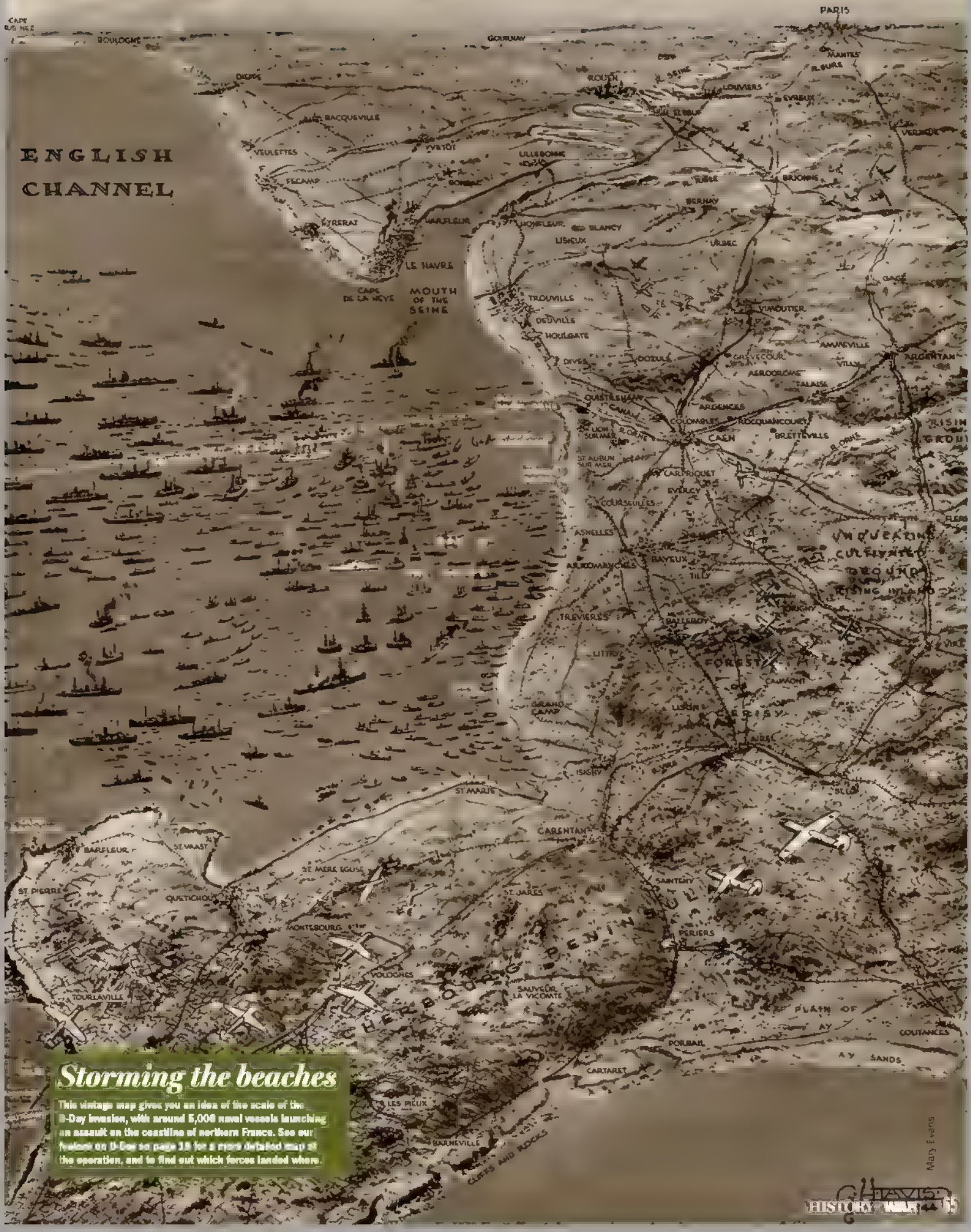



## Storming the beaches

This vintage map gives you an idea of the scale of the D-Day invasion, with around 5,000 naval vessels launching an assault on the coastline of northern France. See our feature on D-Day on page 18 for a more detailed map of the operation, and to find out which forces landed where.

unit that was immortalised in the popular TV series. At Utah beach, you will be given time to browse the Utah Beach Museum and see the memorials to those who came ashore there. The day ends with a look at the other side of the story: at the German Cemetery at La Cambe, you will see the burial site of German tank ace Michael Wittmann, along with those of thousands of other Germans who died in Normandy.

The final full day of the tour will take in some of the sights associated with the events that occurred after D-Day. Your guides will talk you through the bloody battles for Tilly-sur-Seulles and the tough fighting that took place at Fontenay-Le-Pesnel. Driving through the so-called "Scottish Corridor" over the River Odon, you will then visit Hill 112 with its Churchill tank memorial. Hill 112 is often called "the Verdun of Normandy" because of the gruelling fighting that occurred there, and the huge amount of artillery used.

After lunch in Falaise, you will visit the Falaise Pocket and walk along the "Corridor of Death", used by the Germans to make their retreat in August 1944. On Mont Ormel, you will experience the Polish Memorial and Museum, the latter of which details the Poles' ferocious battle – and victory – there from 19-21 August 1944, before you end the day, and the tour, by seeing a very rare original Tiger I tank at Vimoutiers.

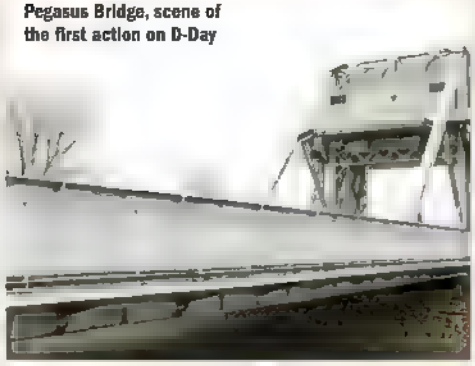
There is an incredible number of sights to see on your short visit to Normandy, and for some it can be an overwhelming experience.

**IF YOU HAPPEN TO BE A VETERAN OF THE D-DAY LANDINGS, PREPARE FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT**

It's one thing seeing actors being gunned down in a big-budget Hollywood blockbuster; it's entirely another to actually stand where real men lost their lives, and many of them at a very young age. Indeed, standing on the sand at Omaha, it's heartbreaking to think that this alien coastline, thousands of miles from home, was the last thing that so many American soldiers saw.

## Scars of war

Bringing the whole story to life are Leger's expert tour guides, who know the D-Day story down to every last detail. Head Guide Paul Reed has been visiting Normandy since 1979 and is the author of the bestselling *Walking D-Day* guidebooks. And other guides have also written books, appeared on TV programmes about D-Day and been helping veterans to return to the area for many years.



Pegasus Bridge, scene of the first action on D-Day

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## Richard Winters

US Army Major Richard "Dick" Winters (whose 12ft-tall bronze statue in Normandy is pictured right) played a pivotal role in the D-Day campaign. A member of Easy Company, 506th Infantry Regiment – the so-called "Band of Brothers" – he parachuted into Normandy just after midnight on 6 June 1944 to embark on a deadly mission to destroy four German 105mm artillery guns that threatened the invasion force. The mission didn't go entirely according to plan – the unit's commander, Thomas Meehan III, went missing and Winters lost his weapon during the drop. However, the latter managed to orient himself and, in Meehan's absence, took control of the unit. Despite being outnumbered, the Band of Brothers were able to destroy the German battery, and Winters continued to command the unit for the remainder of the war.

"There were many Dick Winters in this war, and all deserve the bronze and glory of a statue," former Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge commented at the unveiling of the statue.

Winters, who was portrayed by Damian Lewis in the TV series *Band Of Brothers*, died in 2011 aged 92.

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If your French isn't too rusty, you could even rack the brains of the local people – mindful of the sacrifices made by our grandfathers seven decades ago, the Normandy natives are always respectful to tourists. And if you happen to be a D-Day veteran, prepare for special treatment – in places like Arromanches, the locals don't think twice about approaching heroes of the invasion, offering a handshake or a hug.

"Normandy is a very special place to visit," Reed tells *History Of War*. "Standing on the beaches and knowing what happened there is really something. Films like *Saving Private Ryan* have helped to immortalise the day, and when you stand – as we do on this tour – on the bluffs overlooking Omaha, seeing it from a German machine-gunner's point of view, you wonder how anyone survived."

But survive many of them did. So, too, have many of the original buildings that stood here during Operation Overlord. And some still carry the scars of war, with impact marks from shell and mortar fire – and even bullet holes – peppering walls, churches and houses in the main battle areas. A significant number of sections of the Atlantic Wall defences also survive, and you'll get to see aspects of all of these on the tour.

Concludes Reed, "If you want to understand why D-Day was so important, realise how much was at stake and truly appreciate what Allied troops went through on the beaches of Normandy, this tour puts it all into perspective."

### D-Day and Normandy Tour

**The cost of Leger Holidays' D-Day and Normandy Tour is £375 per person for a five-day (four-night) tour based on two people sharing and travelling by executive coach from over 500 convenient regional joining points across the UK. A four-day (three-night) version of the tour is also available, as is the option to upgrade to Silver Service luxury coach travel on selected dates.**
**For further details and tour dates, call Leger Holidays on 0844 324 9256 or visit its website at www.visitbattlefields.co.uk**

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The cemetery at Utah beach

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# LETTERS *from* AFGHANISTAN

**War on terror:** In *Letters From The Front*, historian Andrew Roberts has gathered correspondence written by British and Commonwealth soldiers. The book includes missives from the First and Second World Wars, and more recent theatres such as Korea and Afghanistan. Here, we look at some examples from the latter conflict

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TWIN Towers in New York City on 11 September 2001 signalled the start of an operation to track down Osama bin Laden, founder of the militant Islamic organisation al-Qaeda, and to dismantle his global network of operatives.

Bin Laden was traced to training camps in Afghanistan, but when the Taliban government refused to extradite him, the US launched Operation Enduring Freedom in conjunction with British forces. Over the next 12-and-a-half years, servicemen would assist in combating Taliban insurgents, and help to rebuild parts of the country devastated by years of civil war.

At first, Britain's involvement was relatively minor, with troops deployed in 2001 to secure Bagram airfield in the Parwan Province. With the Taliban chased into hiding in Pakistan, British troops were part of the ISAF – the International Stabilisation and Assistance Force – responsible for reconstruction and development. Between 2001 and 2005, the cost of British operations was £645million, and the lives of just ten soldiers.

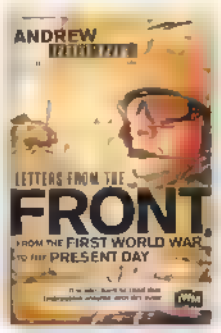
However, in 2004, Taliban forces began infiltrating back into the country, setting up residence in villages in Helmand Province. By 2006, they were there in their hundreds and busy fomenting a resistance against what they termed "foreign occupiers". British forces took responsibility for Helmand in Operation Herrick 4, deploying 3,150 personnel – however, there were only 600 combat troops responsible for controlling a population of 1.5 million. Despite their limited number, troops were persuaded to garrison small towns, and came under repeated attacks, resulting in some of the fiercest fighting since the Korean War. During the defence of the town of Now Zad (nicknamed "Apocalypse Now Zad"), Dean Fisher of the Royal Fusiliers is reported to have fired over 40,000 rounds from his GPMG (general-purpose machine gun).

It would be another two years before troop numbers were at a level capable of withstanding the insurgency, and by 2009 some 9,500 British soldiers were deployed there – although 108 were killed in that year alone. Finally, after an eight-year campaign, the British task force in Helmand was disbanded on 1 April 2014.

The total cost of British operations in Afghanistan has been estimated at £18billion, with a final death toll standing at 448 and a further 2,173 wounded in action.

Towards the end of the campaign, tours of duty in Helmand were often tense affairs, punctuated by long periods of boredom and inactivity. Royal Marine John O'Loughlin's letters provide an insight into everyday life for frontline troops, the dangers they faced from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and grenade attacks, as well as the pain of missing their home and loved ones.

**Over the page, Royal Marine John O'Loughlin's letters back home, March-Sept 2011.** ▶




This feature is an extract from *Letters From The Front, From The First World War To the Present Day* by Andrew Roberts. Copyright © Andrew Roberts 2012. The book is published in the UK by Osprey Publishing, RRP £8.99

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] without the benefits of cartoons and daytime telly. I've made the observation before in the UK that I didn't work for a living, but instead I waited. Well, I thank the Lord for the blessings of [redacted] before I came along. Thirteen tours where teams like mine have been infinitely busier – so what's changed? Well, seasonal factors, progressive factors, but the biggest being that, for Herrick 14, they decided to massively increase the number of teams sent out – more than double previous tours. Now, the bad guys didn't get the memo and have failed to scale their production in accordance, so in a quiet phase like this you have twice the amount of lads scratching their balls. I could use the time wisely and work on my tan but I'm bored and in a puddle of sweat after ten minutes, plus I don't have the body for it yet. I did try working on that part but my patience draws a line at standing in the shadows of brick shithouses waiting to use the weights. So "Operation Get Massive" has been scaled back slightly for the time being, but I'm still looking to make some gains by the end of six months. I interrupt this with the sound of mortars putting up a rapid volley of illum – ah, I've missed [Patrol Base] Rahim!

I'm still working from [Forward Operating Base] Price, but a week's ass sitting was interrupted yesterday for a task that sounded awesome! Intel had come through of an underground bomb factory in a compound that was producing up to 60 IEDs a day. It turned out to be false info, but I got a lovely night sleeping in the desert with the kind of night sky that had me longing for home.

There was a grenade attack on a manned compound a kilometre outside of the gate. Five injured but nothing worse than frag – one grenade failed to detonate, so the team was called out to detonate and clear. The mortars are still throwing up illum. The air is buzzing with the sound of on-call Apaches all around; the base rushes to get men on the ground, and all in the drama of darkness and red torch light. The real Tom Clancy shit was patrolling through the green zone with NVGs and infrared illum, crossing ditches and canals, and skirting along fields and walls in total blackness.

Watching as man after man tried to gauge a ditch jump offers a rare smile, given the trouble gauging depth perception when on monocle. We sprinted the last 20 meters or so, and the compound doors were shut tight behind us. The pace of events along with everyone's adrenaline was still racing. The injured had been evacuated safely but the danger was still palpable from the scramble of radio orders and questions. Our job firstly was to deal with the unexploded grenade in the courtyard, so everyone was ushered into hard cover while Rod and Fraze set up the Dem. In a tiny cupboard room, I lay hunched against any number of guys - everyone just shadows but for the flickers of red torch light The ten minutes to explosion was given, and we sat and waited. I watched as silent witness while others still processed the events, some sat with heads and ears still ringing, a few checked for injuries; but all were thankful for their own lucky "it could of/should of been me" story.
For them, the war in Afghanistan just got real: no one gets hurt on exercise.

foot. Air cover gone, 15 Taliban would then try [and] overrun the compound. The first reaction was

With sunrise came assurance. The night had now passed without incident and, for the first time, people

fields and the children playing. Atmospherics, as they're known, were good, and with that came safety.

gun, arranged its ammo and adjusted my fire position. Once more, everyone braced and waited. And once more, I thought myself selfish and said a prayer. Allah was merciful that day. Half an hour of

fields and everyday life continued both outside and within the compound walls. As the mixed patrol

because for good, but definitely not for bad, the media at home never will.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] month I spent in Nahidullah – and that's not to assume these last few days have been flat-out busy – [redacted]

[redacted] on sentry overlooking north when, a few hundred metres west, gunfire rang out back and forth. In ten [redacted] came in to circle and engage, the trees lighting up in bursts of flashes, and leafs falling like confetti! Winning the firefight can be summed up with the suppression of the enemy by weight of fire – you put [redacted]

There was no confirmation that I heard of that any insurgents had been killed, but if they survived they [redacted] struck his rifle and gone clean through both it and his hand. I watched as two American Blackhawk [redacted]

[redacted] rifleman in a close-combat section. The plan initially was for just me to join this patrol, but it soon became [redacted] patrol" and, with us attached, we could deal with anything uncovered. I joined up to soldier and fight, [redacted]

[redacted] five others wounded. He was a double amputee but died back at Bastion. The brief announcement was all [redacted] ever needed of where we fight. The incident wasn't too far from here, but none of them were based with this [redacted] we all know my luck, and I'm sure it's going to hold out the next five weeks – although with most of us on [redacted]

Right, well I'll call it a day... It's now just gone seven and I'm lying here on my bed fighting off mosquitoes [redacted]

The first fields we crossed were used only for grazing, and the rice fields of Vietnam came to mind. It doesn't rain here in the summer, so water comes through flooding, and in the heat of summer you can find yourself wading ankle-deep through either mud or water. We patrolled on across the fields, our soundtrack the helicopter above, the crack of gunfire and the distant thud of mortar – and us, we were providing a safe route to follow. Left or right of their blue-sprayed markers and you find a foolish man. We cleared the low flooded grass and entered into the tall fields of corn. Stepping into the corn is like entering the jungle, a wall of three-metre greenery like the walls of a maze. You can see no more than two feet, with no points of reference but the sky above – it has a claustrophobic feel, an unwelcome unease.

it meant two things – either they knew where we were and they were close, or they were close and just of automatic fire as another call sign tried to draw out the Taliban into firing back, but again nothing.

the Apache circling. We finally stopped short from our original target, still immersed and hidden in the corn. We sat in the thick mud drinking water while events higher up were co-ordinated. It only sounded like the other end of the field as the helicopters above suddenly unleashed with all fury their chain gun and 30mm cannon – the noise of hundreds of rounds spitting out was fantastic. It was as if Zeus nothing. Finally, we arrived back into the PB – exhausted, filthy and, with it, tempers were a little frayed.

and then claim the propaganda of beating them back into retreat Stand-to was called and everyone to a distance I could shout at the enemy, and still finished the day without firing a single round – carrying

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Robert the Bruce (left) about to defeat Sir Henry de Bohun, a young English knight who had sought to kill the Scottish king at the start of the battle

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# Great Battles

# BANNOCKBURN

**Scottish War of Independence:** The events that led to the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, when Robert the Bruce's outnumbered army defeated the English, were as steeped in medieval murder and mystery as his famous victory was bloody. Nick Soldinger investigates...

ON A COLD, DARK WEDNESDAY in February 1306, two men meet in the half shadows of Greyfriars Church in Dumfries, south-west Scotland. The country is in turmoil: a succession crisis has enabled the English King Edward I – the so-called "Hammer of the Scots" – to divide and conquer the territory in a series of duplicitous and blood-spattered moves that would have impressed even A. Capone.

The two men, Robert the Bruce and John "Red" Comyn, Lord of Badenoch, are nationalists; Scottish patriots who want to send the English King and his armies back to Westminster. Both, however, are contenders for the throne, and the parley has been arranged in the church to ensure that things remain peaceful. Both have even agreed to leave their swords at the door. But their discussion soon turns violent and, in the flickering candlelight, Bruce pulls a dagger and stabs his rival to death.

It may sound like a scene from *Macbeth*, but this violent killing marked the birth of the modern Scottish nation. It set in motion a series of events that would lead to Scottish independence and a proud sense of national identity, forged in revolt, that still resonates 700 years on. When the people of Scotland go to the polls in September later this year to vote on the country's independence, no doubt the names of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, and the heroics of Bannockburn, will once again be invoked to rally Scots to the nationalist cause.

**IN THE FLICKERING CANDLELIGHT, ROBERT THE BRUCE PULLS A DAGGER AND STABS HIS RIVAL TO DEATH**

The fact that Comyn's murder had taken place in a church, in a house of God, was of huge significance in medieval Europe. Remember, this was a time of witches and heretics, crusaders and warrior monks. This was also a time when papal power was at its political peak, and Pope Clement V's judgement was swift and unforgiving. Bruce was excommunicated – expelled from the Catholic Church – a terrible ignominy for any 14th-century nobleman, but for one with aspirations of kingship, potentially disastrous. Bruce needed to move quickly, and move he did. ▶

## The facts

**WHO** The English army under the command of King Edward II, and the Scots, led by Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland

**WHAT** Edward's forces attempted to relieve the besieged Stirling Castle but were intercepted by an army led by Bruce

**WHERE** Bannockburn, Stirling, south-west Scotland

**WHEN** 23-24 June 1314

**WHY** Under the rule of Edward I, English forces had laid waste to Scotland, enforcing military and administrative power. With the death of William Wallace, Robert the Bruce had taken up the fight for Scottish independence against Edward's son, Edward II

**OUTCOME** Despite being outnumbered by at least two to one, Bruce's clever employment of spear walls – or schiltrons – and use of the terrain secured victory against a vast combined army of knights, archers and infantry. However, Scottish independence would not be officially recognised until ten years later

He fled to Glasgow Cathedral, to meet with Bishop Robert Wishart, a leading light in the covert Scottish independence movement, to beg for absolution. He was granted it, along with the support of the Church of Scotland, in exchange for swearing an oath of allegiance to Wishart and his co-conspirators. Within six weeks, Bruce had been crowned King of Scotland, with Wishart acting as chief spin-doctor for the new monarch. "This Robert the Bruce," he told his flock, "he is your King. This is a Crusade, a holy war – fight for him!"

News of this upstart King reached Edward I in England, whose response was typically ruthless, brutal and decisive. He sent his armies north and within a matter of months had crushed Bruce's forces, arrested Wishart, captured the King's Queen, Elizabeth, and subjected his brother, Neil Bruce, to the same grisly death William Wallace had endured a year before – he was castrated, hung, drawn and quartered in public. Bruce had no other option but to flee

## The return of the King

After six months of exile, Bruce returned to the country. It's not known where he'd been, or whether he'd really drawn inspiration from a tenacious spider, as the folklorist Sir Walter Scott famously claimed. What was clear, though, was that he and his supporters had regrouped, rearmed and re-equipped. From 1308 onwards, after the death of Edward I, Bruce either defeated his Scottish rivals in battle or persuaded them to join his cause, and alongside them he drove the English firstly from the Scottish countryside, then from the cities and finally from the castles in a hugely successful guerrilla campaign. By the summer of 1314, there was just one obstacle left – the mighty Stirling Castle, overlooking the Bannockburn river

Stirling Castle dominated central Scotland in the medieval era. For the previous year, it had been besieged by Bruce's brother, who'd secured an agreement from its English commander that, in accordance with the rules of medieval warfare, the garrison would surrender to the Scots by 25 June if it hadn't been relieved

Bruce was furious with his brother for brokering the deal. He knew that it was only a matter of time before the English – now ruled by Edward's son, Edward II – arrived in force to relieve the castle. If they succeeded, everything he'd fought for would be for nought. His dream of an independent Scotland now rested on his 6,000-strong guerrilla army beating the greatest war machine in Europe in open battle. It was a big ask, and that huge war machine was rapidly heading north.

Edward II had assembled a gargantuan force to finally crush the indefatigable Scots. On 17 June 1314, some 18,000 men crossed the border and pushed north towards Stirling Castle. Their mission was simple: to relieve the garrison, destroy Bruce and his ragtag gang of outlaws, and re-establish English dominance in Scotland – with an iron fist. Edward had a formidable array of warriors at his disposal. The majority of his troops were seasoned infantrymen, proficient with sword, axe and crossbow. But he also had units of archers with their feared longbows, as well as heavily armoured knights – the equivalent on the medieval battlefield to .50cal machine-gunners and T34 tanks.

Bruce's army, by comparison, was considerably smaller and less diverse, but surprisingly well equipped. Each man wore a steel helmet, a thick padded leather coat and a pair of flexible steel gloves for holding his iron-tipped, 12ft spear. Many also had axes, knives and swords. This kind of kit did not come cheap, which begs the question: where did it all come from and how was it paid for? After all, Scotland had been at war for 20 years and its economy was in a state of ruin. The answer to that question may lie in one of history's most intriguing events.

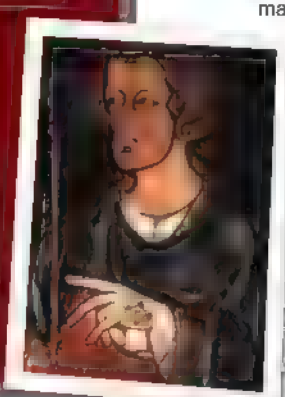
### EDWARD I

Edward Longshanks was a warrior King who was born in 1239 in Westminster, the son of Henry III. His early adulthood took place against a backdrop of civil war between his father and rebel Barons. Edward helped to end the strife by leading royalist forces to victory at the Battle of Evesham in 1265.

In 1270, Edward joined the Eighth Crusade. When his father died two years later, Edward returned to England, determined to conquer the British Isles. In 1277, he invaded Wales, defeated its army and built a string of castles to enforce his authority. When his rule provoked rebellion, he invaded again, and Wales was brought into the English legal and administrative framework.

In 1292, Edward turned his attention to Scotland when a succession crisis presented the opportunity to seize control of the country. Asked to arbitrate in the dispute, Edward nominated John Balliol as King. Balliol duly swore allegiance to Edward, but Edward's demands were so humiliating they pushed the Scots into an alliance with France. Edward responded by invading and conquering Scotland. A resistance movement gathered around William Wallace, but he was captured and executed in 1305.

In 1306, Robert the Bruce picked up Wallace's mantle. Edward was on his way to fight Bruce when he died of dysentery on 7 July 1307.



## Killing off the Templars

While Bruce had been in exile, a seismic power shift had taken place in Christendom. On Friday 13 October 1307, King Philip IV of France ordered that his soldiers raid the Paris headquarters of the Knights Templar, and arrest its leader, Jacques de Molay, and his

**EDWARD II HAD ASSEMBLED A GARGANTUAN FORCE TO FINALLY CRUSH THE SCOTS**

fellow warrior monks on the grounds of heresy. De Molay and his followers were rounded up, imprisoned, tortured and bizarre confessions of indulging in demonic religious and sexual practices forced from them. But King Philip's reasons for crushing the Order had less to do with a love of Christ, and more his love of gold His war with England had left him dangerously close to bankruptcy, and the French King had hit upon a devious scheme to eradicate his huge debts and fill his coffers all in one go.

By the early 14th Century, the Templars had become one of the most powerful, if secretive,

English knights charge their armoured war horses against the outnumbered Scots. However, Robert the Bruce's tactic of using a spear wall proved decisive

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### ROBERT THE BRUCE

Bruce was born in 1274 into an aristocratic Scottish family, a distant relative of Scottish royalty. During the succession crisis in 1290-92, his grandfather was one of the noblemen who emerged as a claimant to the throne. When King Edward I of England was asked to arbitrate during the crisis and chose John Balliol, Bruce's family refused to back their new monarch and, in 1296, they supported Edward's invasion of Scotland, when he forced Balliol to abdicate (at the time, they didn't realise that the English King's true goal was annexation).

Bruce then supported William Wallace's uprising against Edward. When Wallace was defeated at the Battle of Falkirk in 1298, Bruce became a guardian of Scotland – as Wallace had been before him – and emerged alongside John Comyn as the main claimant to the Scottish throne.

The price of kingship came at a huge personal cost for Bruce. His eight-year war against England may have resulted in victory, but three of his brothers were executed, while his wife and daughters were imprisoned for the duration of the conflict. His ex-communication from the Catholic Church – which was declared in 1306 after he had murdered Comyn – was enforced until a year before his death in 1329. Its ignominy caused him such anguish that, just before he died, he insisted his heart be sent to the Holy Land on a Crusade. It was carried as far as Moorish Granada in Spain, where its carrier was killed in battle, and was subsequently returned to Scotland.

organisations in Christendom. Having started life two centuries earlier as the elite fighting force of the Crusades, its power as an organisation flourished after 1139, when the papacy granted its members immunity from regulation and taxation in any part of Christendom. This meant that, although the Templars themselves took a vow of poverty, the organisation built up such huge reserves of gold that it got into the money-lending business. At that time, usury was considered a sin and was therefore illegal across Europe, except when practised by the Templars, who were literally above the law. So they created what was effectively the first pan-European banking system, complete with credit notes, traveller's cheques and, crucially, interest rates. Their wealth was inestimable and Philip owed them a fortune. What easier way to solve his problem than denounce them, dodge his debts and steal their gold?

Except Philip never managed to get his hands on the Templars' fortune, which disappeared as quickly and mysteriously as those Templars who escaped arrest. Confronted with hundreds of heretical confessions, Pope Clement V had little choice but to denounce the organisation, and issued a proclamation that monarchs throughout Europe should arrest the Templars resident in their countries and seize their assets. Indeed, England's Edward benefited to the tune of some £50,000 when his soldiers raided the Templar headquarters in England, the Temple Church, in the Temple district of London.

Nobody knows where the Templars or their wealth vanished to, but Scotland was one of the only places they could have found refuge. When the Pope discovered that Scotland had appointed the ex-communicated Robert the Bruce as its King in 1306, he ex-communicated the entire country. Scotland was therefore almost unique in that it was outside of papal control. Had Bruce offered sanctuary to Templars in exchange for military materiel, tactical advice and financial backing? After all, Bruce was a shrewd man and an opportunist. The role the secretive Templars did or didn't play in the Battle of Bannockburn will probably never be known, but the circumstantial evidence is nothing if not compelling.

## Holy war

As well as being well equipped, Bruce's forces was also well trained and battle-hardened. Moreover, they were fiercely loyal to Bruce and believed in his leadership unquestioningly. Added to that was the fact that they were fighting to defend their homeland and ▶

Robert the Bruce went to war armed with a battleaxe and wearing a golden crown

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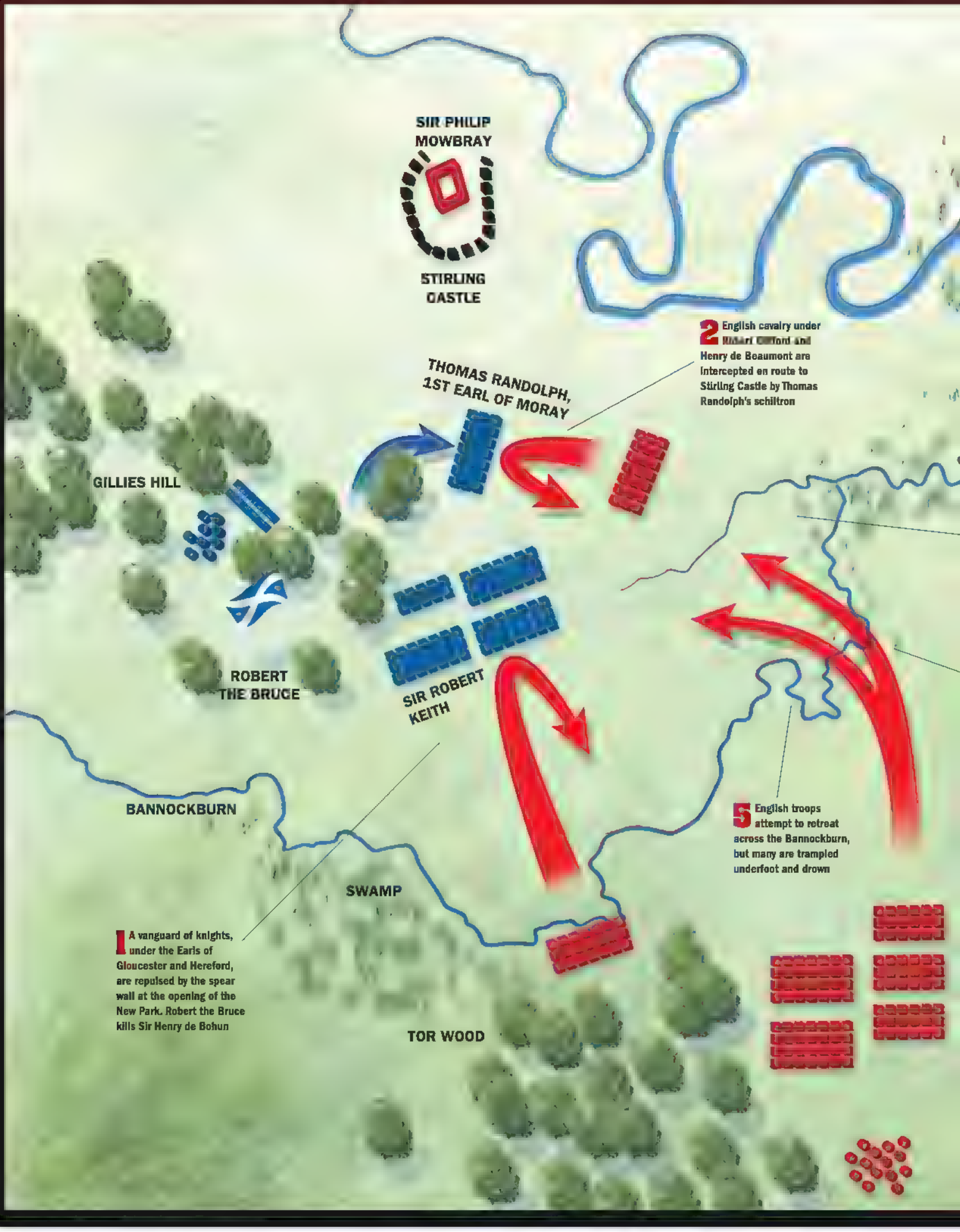

SIR PHILIP MOWBRAY
STIRLING CASTLE
2 English cavalry under Richard Clifford and Henry de Beaumont are intercepted en route to Stirling Castle by Thomas Randolph's schiltron
THOMAS RANDOLPH, 1ST EARL OF MORAY
GILLIES HILL
ROBERT THE BRUCE
SIR ROBERT KEITH
BANNOCKBURN
5 English troops attempt to retreat across the Bannockburn, but many are trampled underfoot and drown
SWAMP
1 A vanguard of knights, under the Earls of Gloucester and Hereford, are repulsed by the spear wall at the opening of the New Park. Robert the Bruce kills Sir Henry de Bohun
TOR WOOD

# Great Battles

# BANNOCKBURN

## 23-24 JUNE 1314

**6** Many English try to retreat across the Forth, but are drowned

SWAMP

**KEY**
- English forces
- Scottish forces

**4** English archers inflict heavy casualties, but are routed by the 500-horse light cavalry led by Sir Robert Keith

**3** On the second day, Edward orders his troops to cross the Bannockburn. The entire Scottish army forms a long spear wall running north to south, and advances towards them

### OPPOSING FORCES

**England**

3,000 mounted men and around 13,000 foot soldiers, including Welsh archers

Total **16,000**

**Scotland**

600 light horsemen and 7,000 foot soldiers. Robert the Bruce was outnumbered by a most two to one

Total **7,600**

EDWARD II

### FOREST OF SPEARS

**The morning after Bruce defeated Henry de Bohun, he ordered the Scots to push forward, and a forest of spears sent Edward's army falling back on itself. Poet/historian John Barbour described it thus: "The great horses of the English charged the pikes of the Scots, as it were a dense forest. There arose a great and terrible crash of spears broken, and of destriers wounded to death."**

### EDWARD II

When his father, Edward Longshanks, died, Edward II inherited his wars and debts. But while Edward I was a man of war, Edward II, by contrast, was a cultured man who surrounded himself with artists and musicians.

Despite being homosexual, Edward entered into an arranged marriage with Isabella of France, and had four children – Edward, John, Eleanor and Joan. The true love of his life, though, was the 1st Earl of Cornwall, Piers Gaveston, whom he lavished with gifts, attention and, crucially, power. The English Barons became increasingly frustrated by this favouritism, raised an army against the King and killed Gaveston. Robert the Bruce took advantage of this in-fighting between Edward and his nobles to reclaim castles across Scotland, until he had them all except for Stirling.

The Battle of Bannockburn was a humiliating loss for Edward, and he never really recovered from it. In 1325, Isabella led an army against him. She and her lover Roger Mortimer captured the King and forced him to abdicate the throne in favour of his son, the 14-year-old Edward III. Edward II died four years later at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire, where his jailers most probably murdered him.

their freedom against a tyranny that had brought them nothing but terror, misery and poverty. In ideological terms, these men were prepared to die for the cause. Bishop Wishart had at last got his Crusade. Not that death was an option the canny Bruce was considering.

Born into a powerful Scottish noble family, Bruce had been trained for war since childhood. Not only was he one of the most feared and skilled knights in Europe; he was also tactically brilliant, strategically innovative and utterly ruthless. For the showdown at Bannockburn, Bruce had trained his men in revolutionary new tactics. The majority of his forces were infantrymen, and the 12ft spear – so loathed by the nobility – was their main weapon.

Forming themselves into dense schiltrons or spear walls, a thousand men strong, they were highly effective against mounted cavalry attack. Their weakness lay, however, in their lack of mobility, which made them particularly vulnerable to archers – as William Wallace had discovered to his great cost when he'd taken on Edward I at the Battle of Falkirk in 1298. Bruce's solution was to make the walls mobile. Rather than stand and wait for the knights to come thundering down on their defensive position, the schiltrons would instead advance with their spears in tight formations.

This tactical innovation not only meant that the schiltrons would be harder for the English archers to hit, but it also gave what had once been a defensive unit an offensive role. A wall of spears advancing towards the battlefield, Bruce hoped, would push the Sassenachs (English) right back across the border.

Another advantage Bruce had was that he knew the land, and he would use that knowledge to make sure he picked where and how the battle should be fought. To the east of Stirling Castle, a small river called the Bannockburn snakes its way through an area of flatland known as the Carse. In 1314, there were only two ways to reach the castle – along an old Roman road or via a narrow track called The Way. Both approaches were from the east.

As he was so heavily outnumbered, Bruce hoped that the terrain would prove to be his secret weapon. He split his forces into three divisions and placed them along the old Roman road, between Edward's approaching army and the castle, blocking the most direct route to the garrison. Two-and-a-half thousand men under the command of Bruce were deployed at the edge of the New Park Forest – a hunting preserve to the east of the castle. Another 600 cavalry and 2,000 infantry were hidden among the trees. The remaining 1,800 took up position by St Ninian's Church, overlooking the junction where the old Roman Road and The Way converged.

## The first day of battle

Edward's army approached Stirling on Sunday 23 June 1314 in complete disarray. The 18,000 men, their horses, and carts full of equipment and supplies, stretched out for miles along what was little more than a track. Edward himself brought up the rear. As the column edged closer, an advanced party of 1,500 knights galloped off to reconnoitre the route to the castle. They crossed the Bannockburn and raced up the old Roman road towards New Park Forest. As they drew closer, they were suddenly confronted by Scots, who emerged from the trees to form a wall of spears.

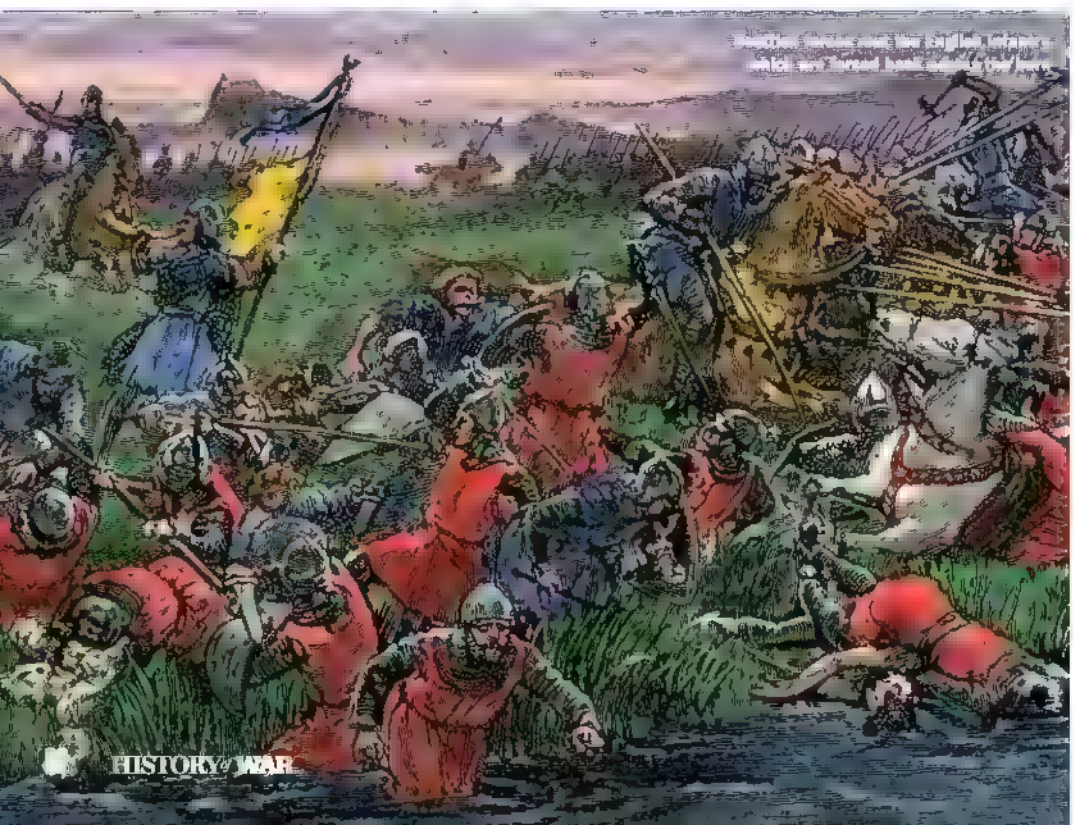
Bruce was right at the front of his troops. Mounted upon a pony, he rode up and down the lines, making sure his men were ready. Clad in complete armour and armed only with a battleaxe, he wore a golden crown so that all could see he was the King. One man who took particular note of this was a young English knight called Sir Henry de Bohun. Thinking he could secure an easy victory – and no doubt instant fame and fortune – de Bohun lowered his lance and charged directly at Bruce.

As he thundered towards him on his mighty warhorse, the English knight must have looked terrifying, but Bruce, on his much smaller mount, stood his ground. Only when de Bohun was almost upon him did the King move. He suddenly turned his pony to one side and, as the hapless de Bohun galloped past, Bruce rose up in his stirrups and brought his battleaxe down with such force on the knight's head that he shattered de Bohun's helmet and split his skull in two. De Bohun's corpse fell to the ground and his riderless horse raced on. It was the stuff of legends and, by the time the battle was over, Robert the Bruce's name would be eternal.

**KNIGHTS WHOSE HORSES WEREN'T IMPALED ON SPEARS WERE DRAGGED FROM THEIR MOUNTS**

The onlooking English knights, incensed to see one of their own so humiliatingly dispatched, charged the Scottish position, but the schiltrons held firm. Scores of knights were killed and, when the odds tipped in his favour, Bruce unleashed his cavalry from their hiding place in the woods. Accordingly, the English knights turned and fled.

While this action had been raging, another unit of 500 knights had charged up The Way to St Ninian's Church to seek an alternative route to the castle. Naturally, Bruce had already anticipated this move and these knights found another shield wall waiting for them at the junction. They charged the schiltrons repeatedly but they, too, found it impossible to break through. Those knights whose horses weren't impaled on the wall of spears were dragged from their mounts and finished off on the ground with swords, daggers, battleaxes and clubs



Eventually, this unit was also forced to retreat back across the Bannockburn. The routes to Stirling Castle had been successfully blocked.

The English knights had expected the Scots to run or crumble, and the completeness of this initial defeat sent shockwaves through Edward's army, having a profound effect on morale. Exhausted from the long march and the intensity of the early fighting, the English army retired for the evening to gather its strength. Believing there was no immediate danger of attack, Edward's knights, numbering in the region of 2,000, made camp on the Carse, the flat land north of where the remaining 16,000 infantrymen and archers settled in for what was to be a miserable night.

On the other side of the battlefield, the Scots, who'd suffered only minimal casualties and had roundly thrashed their enemy twice, retired into the safety of the New Park Forest in high spirits. That night, as Bruce discussed his next move with his Generals around a campfire, a deserter from the English side turned up. The man, a knight named Sir Alexander de Seton, had strong links to the Knights Templar movement, and it's often been speculated that he was, in fact, a double agent who had crossed the lines to feed Bruce vital information. Whatever the truth, what he revealed was to win the battle. The English troops, he told Bruce, had split up for the evening and were vulnerable to attack. On hearing this, Bruce decided to take the fight to the English.

## Defeat on the second day

At dawn, the Scots swept out of the New Park Forest deployed in three divisions of 1,500 men apiece. Bruce remained with a reserve division consisting of another 1,800 troops to the rear. His 600 cavalrymen remained hidden in the forest. The English knights had never seen anything like it. Infantry never attacked cavalry, and yet here were the schiltrons advancing towards them, the points of their spears sparkling in the early-morning sunshine.

Impulsively, the knights jumped on their horses and raced off the Carse to confront the advancing Scots. They galloped up a slope, their horses steaming in the cold morning air, to a narrow field hemmed in on one side by the river and on the other by a wood. Without leadership or a collective strategy, the knights blundered into the advancing schiltrons. With little room for manoeuvre, they soon found that their key advantage against infantry – speed and power – was nullified. The Scots ground forward relentlessly behind their spear wall, forcing the knights back down the hill towards the Carse.

As the knights retreated, the watching English King dispatched a detachment of Welsh archers, who opened up on the densely packed schiltrons from one side of the battlefield. As a hailstorm of arrows descended on Bruce's troops, the battle hung momentarily in the balance, as the Scots finally started to take significant casualties.

But Bruce was one step ahead of Edward again. His cavalry units in the woods broke cover and charged Edward's archers. Those that weren't hacked down where they stood fled the field. Bruce then got the reserve schiltron he was commanding to reinforce the line. His entire army was now committed. Scotland's army was taking on England's war machine in open battle and, although his troops were still heavily outnumbered, they were winning the fight.

Robert the Bruce leads his knights in the defeat of superior English forces at Bannockburn

Bruce's wall of spears now stretched right across the battlefield, moving forward with unstoppable momentum, pushing the English back towards the Bannockburn. The English could do little to disrupt the line. Any knights who did manage to force their way into the schiltrons were quickly and ruthlessly dealt with, as they were dragged from the saddle and bludgeoned where they fell. A counter attack by a small detachment of Edward's infantry could do little to stop the wall of spears either, and – with nowhere left to go – Edward's shattered, shambolic cavalry was forced down a steep gorge and into the Bannockburn river itself. Here, they were cut to pieces, while Edward's 16,000 foot soldiers on the other side of the Bannockburn watched on helplessly. Without cavalry, there could be no victory, and the English foot soldiers were left with no choice but to retreat south rapidly.

Edward fled the battlefield and headed straight for Stirling Castle, where he sought refuge. The Scots, however, had been victorious and, because chivalric code demanded that the garrison commander keep his word, he was duty-bound to surrender. Edward, realising that he was in real danger of being taken prisoner by the Scots, ran to join his retreating army as they raced back over the border. They left behind more than a thousand of their comrades dead on the field of battle, while thousands more had been taken prisoner. Many of these Bruce would use to barter for the lives of his friends and loved ones – including his wife, Elizabeth, who he had not seen for eight years, and the man who had made him King, Bishop Wishart.

By comparison, the losses to the Scottish army were only around 400, due in no small part to Bruce's ingenious tactics. News of his famous victory at Bannockburn swept across Europe, and his famous spear-wall tactic soon became standard military practice across the continent – a practice that was still in use 400 years later.

But of more importance than any of that, Robert the Bruce had won freedom for his nation from English tyranny, and secured Scotland's future as a sovereign nation. Well, at least for the time being...

*Leaders of Men*

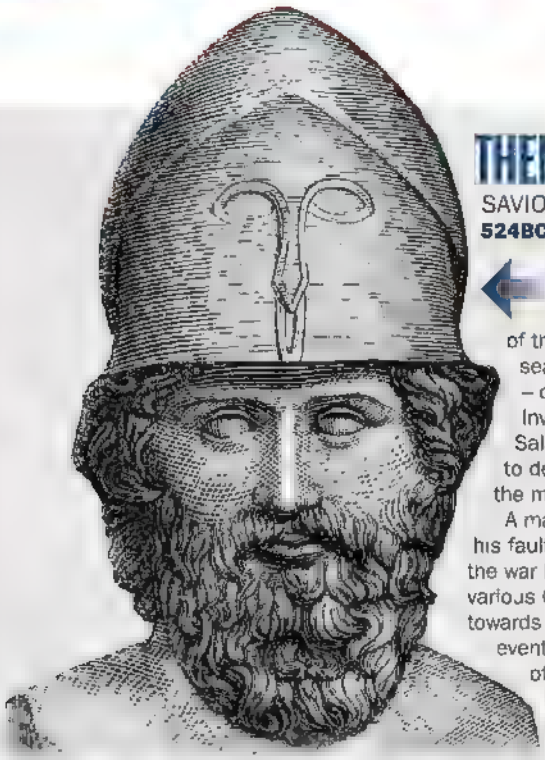
# NAVAL COMMANDERS

## From the "saviour of Greece" to "the Nelson of the East", Chris Short reveals the men whose mastery of sea-based warfare helped to shape the course of history

With 70 per cent of the planet's surface covered in water, it's inevitable that combat at sea has played a huge part in the history of warfare. But it's not always been about who could build the biggest ships or the largest fleets – as you'll see from our collection of leaders, the development and application of naval strategy is key for success at sea. And on numerous occasions, the commander with the best strategy has won the day, despite coming up against seemingly insurmountable odds.

Naval warfare dates back around 3,200 years, with the first recorded sea battle taking place in the Mediterranean between a fleet of Hittite ships and vessels from Cyprus. Over time, these clashes grew ever larger, and the battle of Salamis in 480 BC – which finally saw the Persian invaders repelled – involved as many as 1,000 ships and 200,000 men.

The biggest naval campaign of all took place in the Second World War, around Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. Five US fleets and one Australian fleet, comprising 236 ships and hundreds of support vessels, fought some 70 ships of the Japanese Imperial Navy. With combat power turning to aircraft and missiles, it's doubtful we'll ever witness its like again.



## THEMISTOCLES

SAVIOUR OF GREECE

**524BC-459BC**

More than 2,000 years ago, one man came to be known as "the man most instrumental in achieving the salvation of Greece" from Persian invaders, and his naval policies would have a lasting impact as maritime power became the cornerstone of the Athenian Empire. A politician and general, Themistocles was a strong advocate of sea power and, in 483BC, he persuaded the government to build a fleet of 200 galleys – called *triremes* – thus establishing an Athenian Navy. During the Second Persian Invasion, he was in effective command of the Allied fleet at the battles of Artemisium and Salamis, and his influence in increasing the size of the Navy meant that Athens was able to defend itself against a larger Persian fleet (the Battle of Salamis is regarded as one of the most significant conflicts in history). With Persia repulsed, Athens entered a golden era.

A master strategist from a young age, Themistocles was not without his faults. His arrogance and greed led him to enrich himself after the war by using the threat of the Athenian fleet to extort money from various Greek states. As a result of the controversy over his extortion, towards the end of 469BC he began to accrue enemies and he was eventually forced to flee, ironically, to Persia, his only secure place of refuge. He lived there for his remaining years, during which time he pledged his allegiance to the Persians.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**When all of the Greek commanders met after the war to determine who had contributed the most to victory, they all named themselves first and Themistocles second.**

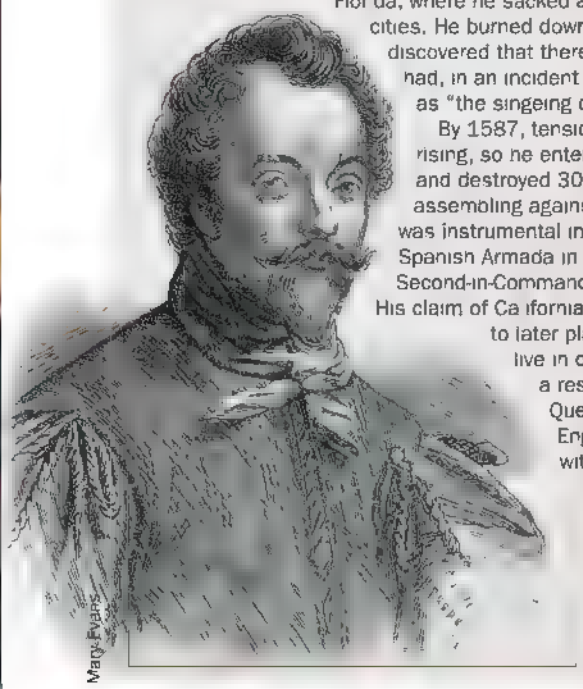
## FRANCIS DRAKE

PRIVATEER, EXPLORER, SLAVER, HERO

**1540-1596**

Along with Horatio Nelson, who also features on this list, Drake is one of the most famous naval heroes in history. An English sea captain and politician of the Elizabethan era, his exploits were controversial but his circumnavigation of the globe between 1577 and 1580 aided our understanding of the true geography of the world. In light of England's imminent war with Spain, in 1585 Drake sailed to the West Indies and the coast of Florida, where he sacked and plundered Spanish cities. He burned down Santiago when he discovered that there was no treasure to be had, in an incident that came to be known as "the singeing of the King's beard".

By 1587, tensions with Spain were rising, so he entered the port of Cadiz and destroyed 30 ships that were assembling against the British. Drake was instrumental in the fight with the Spanish Armada in 1588, acting as Second-in-Command of the English fleet. His claim of California for England led directly to later plans to send people to live in colonies in America. As a result of his endeavours, Queen Elizabeth I of England bestowed him with a knighthood.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

**The Spanish considered Drake a pirate, calling him "The Dragon". King Philip II offered a reward of 20,000 ducats, or £4million, for his life.**

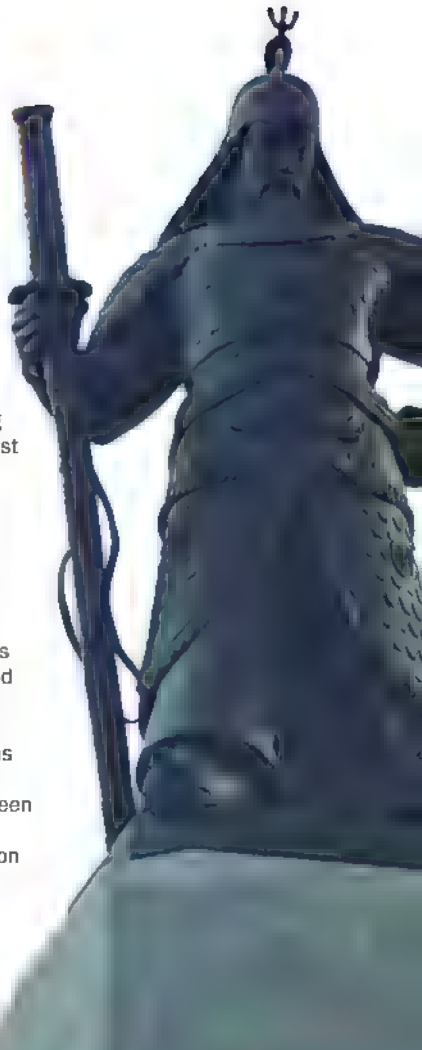
## ADMIRAL YI SUN-SIN

KOREAN TACTICIAN

**1545-1598**

A Korean naval commander, Sun-sin was extremely well respected for his conduct on and off the battlefield, by both the Koreans and the Japanese. This is largely due to his achievement in the Battle of Myeongnyang during the Imjin War against the Japanese Army off the south-west coast of Korea in 1597. Despite being outnumbered ten to one, Sun-sin succeeded in destroying 31 Japanese warships in one of the most astonishing defeats in military history. No other engagement involving such an outnumbered fleet has resulted in such a disproportionate victory.

Another of Sun-sin's greatest accomplishments was his resurrection of the "Turtle Ship", which became the most famous part of his fleet. The ship's dragon figurehead held four cannons and emitted a smokescreen as a means of applying psychological pressure on his enemies. The ship itself had 11 cannons on each side, enabling it to attack with devastating force in all directions. Between 1592 and 1598, Sun-sin achieved 23 victories against Japan during its invasion of Korea, making him a truly worthy contender for inclusion in our list.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Sun-sin was fiercely loyal to his soldiers and would sometimes personally fulfil their dying wishes.**

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00 1250 1500 1525 1550 1575 1600 1625 1650 1675 1700

## MICHIEL ADRIAENSZOON DE RUYTER

GRANDFATHER OF THE DUTCH NAVY

**1607-1676**

Adriaenszoon made his first sea voyage at the age of nine, but was captured two years later by the Spanish. Fortunately, he escaped with two companions, returning to the Netherlands via France. Over the years, he proved himself to be so adept a privateer that by 1636, he was nicknamed De Ruyter (The Raider). He's the most famous and one of the most skilled admirals in Dutch history, best known for his role in the Anglo-Dutch Wars, where he fought the English and French, scoring victories against both. He retired from naval command at the age of 45, but the First Anglo-Dutch War of 1652-1654 saw him called into duty again.

If there's one battle where his legacy was formed, it was the Raid on the Medway, where much of the English fleet was destroyed, after Adriaenszoon sailed his fleet up the Thames and inflicted a defeat on his enemies in their own waters. His performance in the Third Anglo-Dutch War then prevented an invasion of the Dutch Republic from the sea. The men under his command held him in great regard and affectionately referred to him as Bestevaër (Grandfather).

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Adriaenszoon was married three times. His first wife died in childbirth, his second died unexpectedly and his third was widow Anna van Gelder.**

## JOHN PAUL JONES

US NAVY PIONEER

**1769-1852**

Sometimes referred to as the "Father of the United States Navy", Jones was a controversial individual. His reputation suffered serious setbacks during his career, due to his violent temper, but his contribution to the US Navy cannot be disputed. Jones was a Scottish sailor and the United States' first well-known naval fighter in the American Revolution.

He began his maritime career at the age of 15 as an apprentice aboard the Friendship, and by the age of 21 he was captain of a ship sailing between the West Indies and British ports. He's remembered for his unwillingness to surrender while the slightest hope of victory still burned. There are two quotes associated with Jones, the most famous being, "I have not yet begun to fight!", spoken during the famous battle between the Bonhomme Richard and Serapis warships in 1779. He refused to give in, and his eventual victory in the battle came to be the highlight of his career.

His second quote is, "I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast, for I intend to go in harm's way." His indomitable spirit and positive attitude helped to establish the traditions of courage and professionalism that the US Navy proudly maintains.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**His reputation came into question in 1770 when he lashed a disobedient sailor, who died a few weeks later.**

## HORATIO NELSON

NATIONAL TREASURE

**1758-1805**

One of the most famous naval heroes ever to have lived, Horatio Nelson is the most successful and iconic figure of the British Navy. The young Nelson grew up inspired by a vision to become a British military hero, having had a premonition and holding a passionate belief in his own ability.

Nelson was a British flag officer and served in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. His fame and legacy were cemented by the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, in which Nelson's 27 ships defeated 33 French and Spanish ships. The Franco-Spanish fleet lost 27 vessels, to none of Nelson's, and the threat of a French invasion was ended.

Trafalgar was the last battle that Nelson would ever participate in, as he was mortally wounded after being shot through his back. Before the battle, he sent an inspiring message to his fleet, saying, "England expects that every man will do his duty" – the most famous signal in naval history. His last words, rather poignantly, were, "Thank God I have done my duty." His death in victory made him a huge symbol of national pride; he was given a full state funeral, and a column was later erected in his honour in London's Trafalgar Square.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Despite being a fantastic military leader at sea, Nelson was a lifelong sufferer of seasickness.**

1800 1825 1850 1875

1795 1800 1805 1810 1815 1820 1825 1830 1835 1840 1845 1850 1855 1860 1865 1870 1875 1880

Mary Evans

## HEIHACHIRO TOGO

"THE NELSON OF THE EAST"

**1843-1934**

A *Gensui* (Admiral of the Fleet) in the Imperial Japanese Navy, and one of the country's greatest naval heroes, son of a samurai Togo had his first experience of war at the age of 15 in the Anglo-Satsuma War. He later went on to study naval science as an apprentice officer in England between 1871 and 1878, where he developed new tactics for engaging an advancing enemy fleet.

After the outbreak of fighting in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Togo directed the ten-month naval blockade of the Russian military base at Port Arthur, helping to bring about its surrender. After further conflicts, he succeeded in obliterating the Russian fleet by making a manoeuvre called "crossing the enemy", where he turned his column against the Russian line of advance, destroying 33 of the 35 Russian ships, thus ending the war. After his victory, western journalists nicknamed him "The Nelson of the East". Upon the war's conclusion, he was made a member of the British Order of Merit by King Edward VII, and became highly acclaimed around the world, regarded with great affection for his abilities.

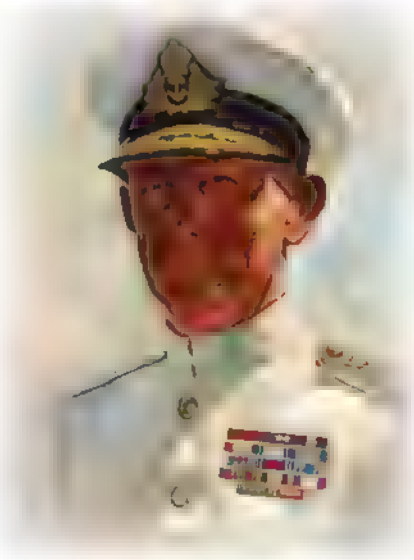
**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Togo kept journals in English and wrote, "I am firmly convinced that I am the reincarnation of Horatio Nelson."**

# SIR ANDREW CUNNINGHAM

KNIGHT COMMANDER

**1883-1963**



Cunningham's naval career began at the age of ten, when he received a telegram from his father, a Professor at Trinity College, Dublin, asking, "Would you like to go into the Navy?" Despite never having been at sea, nor having any family history of maritime adventures, the young Cunningham replied, "Yes, I should like to be an Admiral." With this, he went on to command the destroyer HMS Scorpion during the First World War and most of the inter war period.

During the Second World War, as Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean fleet, Cunningham led British naval forces to victory in several critical battles, including the attack on Taranto in 1940 – the first completely aircraft ship-to-ship naval attack in history. One Italian battleship was sunk and two others seriously damaged in the engagement.

General Dwight Eisenhower later said of Cunningham, "He remains, in my opinion, at the top of my subordinates in absolute selflessness, energy, devotion to duty and knowledge of his task. My opinion as to his superior qualifications has never wavered for a second."

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**During his retirement, Cunningham held several ceremonial titles, including Lord High Steward at the coronation of Elizabeth II.**

# ISOROKU YAMAMOTO

JAPANESE ICON

**1884-1943**

The second Japanese naval commander in our list, Yamamoto is arguably more famous than Togo, though both are worthy of equal admiration for their achievements. Yamamoto was a Japanese Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet during the Second World War, responsible for the attack on Pearl Harbor and the ill-fated Battle of Midway.

Throughout his career, he strongly opposed many of Japan's military ventures and vocalised his opposition to war with the United States, believing it was a conflict that could not be won. As the Deputy Navy Minister in 1937, he made a formal apology to United States Ambassador Joseph C. Grew for the bombing of gunboat USS Panay, which made him a subject of death threats and hate mail from pro-war factions in Japan. As a result, Navy Minister Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa promoted him to Commander-in-Chief in 1939, commenting, "it was the only way to save his life – send him to sea."

However, Yamamoto's actions in devising the attack on Pearl Harbor restored faith in him, and he was instrumental in raising the number of ships that the Japanese military was permitted to build. His death after being shot down in his plane was a devastating blow to Japanese morale.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Yamamoto was an avid gambler and frequently made jokes about moving to Monte Carlo to establish his own casino.**

1900 1925 1950 1975

1885 1890 1895 1900 1905 1910 1915 1920 1925 1930 1935 1940 1945 1950 1955 1960 1965 1970 1975

Mary Evans

# CHESTER NIMITZ

FIVE-STAR FLEET ADMIRAL

**1885-1966**

The most famous commander in the Second World War, Nimitz was a Fleet Admiral of the United States Navy and played a major role in the conflict as Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet. As the leading US Navy authority on submarines, Nimitz conducted successful amphibious assaults on both Iwo Jima and Okinawa, as well as ordering the US Army Air Forces to mine the Japanese ports and waterways by air in a mission called Operation Starvation, which succeeded in severely interrupting Japanese logistics.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and as soon as the resources became available to him, Nimitz shifted to the offensive and defeated the Japanese Navy in the Battle of the Coral Sea, the Battle of Midway and in the Solomon Islands Campaign. Over the course of the war, he commanded a total of some 5,000 ships and two million men, amounting to more military power than had been wielded by all commanders in all previous wars.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**There were no Army officer appointments left in his hometown, so Nimitz studied for, and received, the one last appointment for the Navy.**

TRIGGER POINT

# THE START OF THE SECOND BOER WAR

**When gold was discovered in the plains of South Africa, tensions between Britain and the Dutch colonists finally boiled over. The result, explains Chris Short, was the longest, bloodiest and costliest war since the Napoleonic era**

IT'S NO SECRET THAT, HISTORICALLY, Britain has resorted to brutality in order to expand its interests on a global scale. And the tactic seemingly paid off – the British Empire that emerged out of the late 16th and early 17th Centuries became the largest in known history, prompting George Macartney to refer to it in 1773 as "the vast Empire on which the sun never sets". The Second Boer War – fought between 1899 and 1902 – was just one more step in the nation's quest for dominance, a violent conflict that historian Phil Moore places at number five in his list of ways that the British Empire ruined the world.

## The Great Trek

Tensions between the Boers – the Dutch farmers who had first settled in South Africa in the mid-17th Century – and the British Empire had been simmering for almost a century prior to the outbreak of the conflict. In 1806, to prevent Napoleon from seizing the territory, and to gain control of the crucial Far East trade routes, a British military expedition arrived at the Cape Colony and defeated the Dutch at the Battle of Blaauwberg. The British had then acquired the colony and immediately begun to encourage immigration by British settlers, who struggled to make peace with the Dutch.

Many of the Boers, dissatisfied with aspects of the British rule – and particularly the abolition of slavery in December 1834 – began to migrate away from the administration in what became known as "the Great Trek". Around 12,000 left the colony, journeying north and east, and establishing two independent Boer republics: the South African Republic (SAR) in 1852 – also known as the Transvaal Republic – and the Orange Free State in 1854. The British recognised the two republics, but an attempted annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 led to the First Boer War of 1880-81. With the Boers victorious, the independence of the two republics was restored subject to certain conditions, but relations between them and the British remained uneasy, and would provide a strong catalyst for the Second Boer War.

**IN 1886, GOLD WAS DISCOVERED IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

In 1886, gold was discovered in the Witwatersrand area of the SAR, making the Transvaal the richest nation in southern Africa and the single biggest gold producer in the world. As a result, thousands of fortune-seekers began pouring in from across the globe, particularly Britain and the United States, to take advantage. To cope with the influx of these Uitlanders – the name given to the immigrants – and the black and white workers brought in to mine the gold, the city of Johannesburg appeared almost overnight as a shanty town.

The resulting Boers became intimidated by this sudden change in population, and sought to contain the Uitlanders' growing influence through requiring lengthy residential qualifying periods before voting rights could be obtained, by imposing taxes on the gold industry, and by introducing controls through licensing, tariffs and administrative requirements. This, in turn, frustrated the Uitlanders, who established a Reform Committee – headed by key politicians and mining magnates including Colonel Frank ▶

Getty Images

Pontoons of British troops cross a river in the Transvaal, 1900

# KEY FIGURES

### PAUL KRUGER

Born to Prussian parents, Kruger would become known as the "Father of the Afrikaner nation". He was enemies with Cecil Rhodes, as the two men differed in their opinions on the future of South Africa. His ultimatum of the withdrawal of British citizens from the Transvaal took the crisis in South Africa to the stage of war.

### CECIL RHODES

Rhodes dreamed of unifying the South African republics under British rule. As Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, he was the brains of the failed Jameson Raid, and he conspired to overthrow Kruger's government. By his death in 1902, he had helped bring a million square miles of Africa under British domination.

### JAN SMUTS

A pioneer in South African politics, British subject Smuts initially favoured Rhodes' ideas. However, after the failure of the Jameson Raid, he defected, being appointed State Attorney by Kruger. He was thus at the centre of Transvaal politics and, despite the Boers losing the war, he remained in favour of a united South Africa.

### JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Chamberlain sought to use the disenfranchised Uitlanders to bring British domination over the Boer republics. In 1897, he asked the Cabinet to increase the British garrison in South Africa by 3-4,000 men. By 1899, 20,000 British troops were based in the Cape and Natal.

### SIR ALFRED MILNER

Milner was appointed High Commissioner and Governor-General of the Cape in August 1897 to pursue the issue of Uitlanders' rights in the Transvaal. He publicised the cause of the Uitlanders, swinging British public opinion in their favour, and enabling Milner and Chamberlain to push for further troop reinforcements.

### LORD ROBERT CECIL (LORD SALISBURY)

The British PM disliked the Boers and claimed that self-government could not be granted to the Cape Colony because doing so would be handing over power to the Dutch, who "hate us as much as a conquered people can hate their conquerors". He also disagreed with the way the colonists were treating the black population.

## OPPOSING FORCES

### PERSONNEL

**BRITISH**

British troops numbered 336,000, while colonial troops numbered around 112,000, resulting in a total force of over 448,000.

**BOER**

Boer forces stood at around 88,000, meaning they were outnumbered by around five to one.

### AMMUNITION

**BRITISH**

Martini-Henry rifles and carbines, and Lee-Metford and Lee-Enfield carbines and rifles. The Lee-Metfords and Lee-Enfields had ten-round magazines, making them revolutionary weapons in modern warfare. The British also used trusted Webley, Smith, Colt and Mauser pistols.

**BOER**

Mauser carbine and Krag magazine rifles, and Martini-Henry single-shot rifles. Each gun had different types of ammunition, making them impractical on the battlefield, and the Boers were quickly in short supply, so they began to use captured British weapons extensively.

### ANIMALS

**BRITISH**

Animals were an important part of logistics for the Second Boer War, and the British Empire exported 360,000 horses to South Africa at the beginning of the conflict, drawn from Britain and Europe. In total, more than 770,000 horses, donkeys and mules were employed during the war.

**BOER**

While figures on the exact number of horses used by the Boers are unknown, they're thought to run into the hundreds of thousands, as the majority of Boer men were farmers who reared their own horses. They also made sure to capture any horses from the British when the opportunity arose.

Rhodes, brother of Cape Colony Prime Minister Cecil Rhodes – to represent their interests.

Angered by Transvaal President Paul Kruger's failure to keep his promises, and intent on unifying the republics under British rule, in December 1895 Cecil Rhodes supported a plan to overthrow the SAR government (a notorious imperialist, Rhodes once said, "I contend that [the British] are the finest race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings, what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence.") It was hoped that the Jameson Raid – named after the politician Leander Starr Jameson, who was integral to the plot – would trigger an uprising among the Uitlanders in the Transvaal. However, a lack of support meant that the plan failed and only served to alienate many Cape Afrikaners from the British, while uniting the Transvaal Boers behind President Kruger. It also resulted in the unification of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State in opposition to British imperialism.

The following year, a military pact was made between the two republics. As part of the move, the Transvaal army was re-equipped with the best modern European artillery. The army now comprised 25,000 highly armed men who could mobilise and take up position within two weeks.

It has been claimed that the British government did not believe that the Boers were preparing for war – or, at least, that they were incapable of putting up a worthy resistance against the British Empire. Nevertheless, Governor-General Alfred Milner agreed to attend a conference with Kruger in Bloemfontein in May 1899, organised by President Martinus Steyn of the Orange Free State. However, negotiations quickly broke down, despite Kruger's offer of concessions. So, in October 1899, Lord Chamberlain issued an ultimatum demanding full equality and rights for British citizens resident in the Transvaal. Kruger, however – believing that war was an inevitability – had issued his own ultimatum, giving the British just 48 hours to withdraw all their troops from the Transvaal border; otherwise, along with the government of the Orange Free State, he would declare war.

Back in Britain, before news of Kruger's responding ultimatum had reached London, several key colonial leaders favoured an annexation of the Boer republics and, confident that the Boers could be quickly defeated, planned and organised a short war, citing the Uitlanders' unachieved grievances as justification. Prime Minister Lord Salisbury was not so eager to proceed with the plan, as he despised extreme patriotism in the form of aggressive, warlike policy, and also distrusted the abilities of the British Army in carrying out such a task, due to the lack of money and modernisation invested in it in recent decades. Nevertheless, he decided to lead Britain into war, largely due to his disagreement with the Boers' treatment of black South Africans.

### Severe drought

It turned out that the Boer community – which was extremely conservative and opposed to any form of improvement in the lives of Africans and "coloureds" (people of mixed African and European blood) – were enslaving children and young adults captured in war. And while the British government agreed that ethnic minorities were not entitled to racial equality across the spectrum, they felt that this was a move too far.

News of Kruger's ultimatum reached London on the same day that it was due to expire, and to say that it was mocked by the British press would be an understatement. *The Times* stated that "an official document is seldom amusing *and* useful, yet this is both", while *The Daily Telegraph* declared that "Kruger has asked for war, and war he must have!"

**AFTER NUMEROUS BATTLES IN WHICH VICTORY WAS CLAIMED BY BOTH THE BRITISH AND THE BOERS, THE WAR WAS WON BY A "SCORCHED EARTH" POLICY**

However, the British government's response could not have been more different. Instead of mocking the ultimatum, they had serious concerns because much-needed improvements to the British Army were long overdue. Lord Salisbury was forced to explain to a surprised Queen Victoria that "we have no army capable of meeting even a second-class continental power". In the end, it made no difference – the ultimatum expired and Britain went to war with the two Boer republics.

After numerous battles in which victory was claimed by both the British and the Boers, the war was won by a "scorched earth" policy that devastated the Veld (the vast areas of farmland) and caused considerable hardship among the civilian population. Anybody who supported the Boer cause – whether they were black or white – saw their farms burned down. In total, around 30,000 were destroyed, and

**1830s-40**
The Great Trek sees around 12,000 Boers leave the Cape Colony and journey north and east to escape British rule.

**1852**
The South African Republic (the Transvaal) is founded.

**1854**
The Orange Free State is founded.

**1886**
Gold is discovered in the Witwatersrand, generating attention from hundreds of investors and prospectors looking to capitalise on the find.

**1895-6**
The Jameson Raid takes place to trigger uprisings among Uitlanders, but a lack of support causes the plot to fail.

This chromolith depicts the Battle of Belmont, on 23 November 1899, where 8,000 British troops took on 2,000 entrenched Boer soldiers, and lost 200 men

dozens of entire villages were also obliterated). The British intention was to cut off essential supplies of food and shelter to the enemy, driving them out of the hills and into a pitched battle, where the colonial forces were confident of an overwhelming victory. What made matters worse was that in 1902 and 1903, South Africa suffered a severe drought, exacerbating the situation further

Indeed, in accordance with the British public's disapproval of the expense of military conflict, and of the violence in the Boer War itself, the British Stop the War Committee (STWC) was founded. Its leader, William Stead, proclaimed, "Stop the war. It is an unjust war... why are our sons and brothers killing and being killed in South Africa? Stop the war and stop it now!"

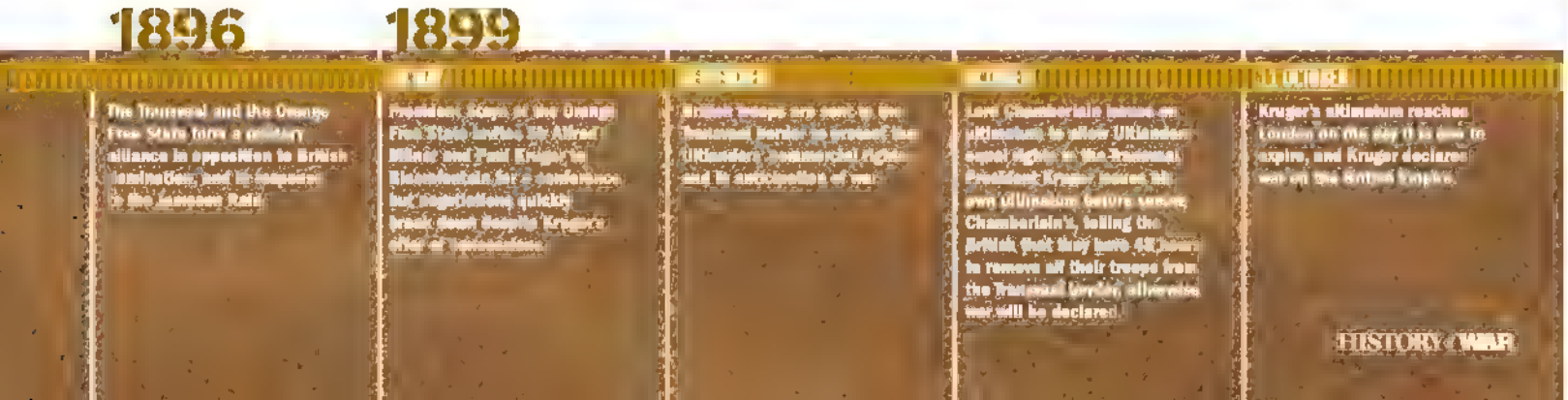
After entire villages and regions had been destroyed, the British attempted to prevent the Boers from re-establishing communities and obtaining supplies from their home bases by forcibly transferring them to concentration camps. These camps became a familiar sight in South Africa at this time and, although similar set-ups had been used in previous conflicts, this marked the first time that an entire nation had been systematically targeted, and also the first time that some regions had been completely depopulated. Nearly 28,000 Boer women and children, and around 14,000 black Africans, were to perish in these concentration camps, with overcrowding and poor sanitation aggravated by the halving of prisoners' rations

The Boers' recourse to irregular warfare, and Britain's response in herding 100,000 women and children into concentration camps, formed an ominous vision of the guerrilla tactics and mass detentions that have come to symbolise 20th-century warfare.

## Unethical tactics

The British Empire celebrated victory after two-and-a-half years of intense conflict using brutal force and questionably unethical tactics, but even after the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging in May 1902, the Empire still managed to wreak havoc. Jan Smuts, who would later become Prime Minister of South Africa, said of Lord Kitchener's "clean-up" operation, "He has begun to carry out a policy in both Boer republics of unbelievable barbarism and gruesomeness, which violates the most elementary principles of the international rules of war. This violation is really very characteristic of the nation, which always plays the role of chosen judge over the customs and behaviour of all other nations."

In essence, the war was brought on by greed and a desire for domination. The British Empire sought to claim ownership of the entire Transvaal and seize its precious gold, with little morality in the way it was to be achieved. This unjust and unnecessary war is not only a low point in Britain's colonial rule, but also served to highlight the poor condition of the British military: the Boers were outnumbered five to one, yet lost just 7,000 men compared to around 22,000 British troops. This weakness against an inferior, irregular army sent a clear signal to the German Empire that Britain was no longer a force to be reckoned with.


1896
1899
The Transvaal and the Orange Free State form a military alliance in opposition to British intervention, and in response to the Jameson Raid
President Kruger of the Orange Free State invites Sir Alfred Milner and Paul Kruger to Bloemfontein for a conference, but negotiations quickly break down despite Kruger's offer of concessions
British troops are sent to the Natal border to protect the Uitlanders' commercial rights and in anticipation of war
Lord Chamberlain issues an ultimatum, to allow Uitlander equal rights in the Transvaal. President Kruger issues his own ultimatum before same, Chamberlain's, telling the British that they have 48 hours to remove all their troops from the Transvaal border, otherwise war will be declared
Kruger's ultimatum reaches London on the day it is due to expire, and Kruger declares war on the British Empire.
HISTORY OF WAR

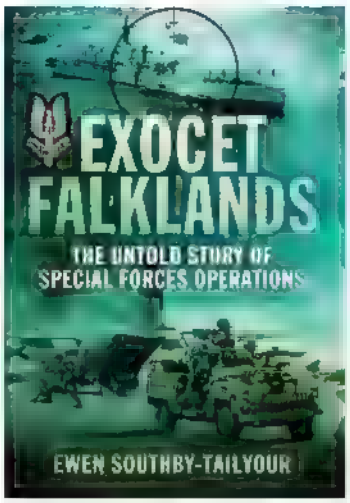
# REVIEWS

*History Of War* casts its eye over the military-based **books, DVDs and games** that may or may not convince you to part with your cash this month

## EXOCET FALKLANDS: THE UNTOLD STORY OF SPECIAL FORCES OPERATIONS

**Ewen Southby-Tailyour** *Pen & Sword Maritime* **RRP £25**

★★★★★




On one level, this is a superbly researched history book about one of the least-known operations of the Falklands conflict. On another, it's quite simply a thundering great read.

The story is reminiscent of one of those great old black and white war movies. Think Noel Coward and David Lean's *In Which We Serve*, J Lee Thompson's *Ice Cold In Alex* or José Ferrer's *The Cockleshell Heroes*. That's not to belittle either this extraordinary tale or its telling – it's just that the special-forces operation it describes is filled with more stiff upper lips, hopeless odds and heroics than a John Mills box set. And, staggeringly, it's all true.

By 4 May 1982, the Falklands conflict was going very nicely for Britain. Royal Marines had retaken South Georgia with ease, covert Special Boat Service units were already on the Falkland Islands, and the sinking of the Belgrano had been greeted with jingoistic triumphalism. Then, just after 10am, a Super Étendard fighter of the Argentine Navy located HMS Sheffield chugging south and opened fire. The Exocet missile that struck the ship would eventually sink it, with the loss of 20 lives. The British politicians needed a PR win – and quickly.

Someone came up with an audacious idea. Two RAF Hercules transport planes, crammed with 50 SAS soldiers, would fly into Argentina, land at the Rio Grande airbase and destroy the remaining Exocets on the runway. It was more Hollywood than Hereford, and was unsurprisingly doomed to failure.

The overall plan was given the name Operation Mikado, but a reconnaissance mission, known as Operation Plum Duff, had to be undertaken first. In *Exocet Falklands*, Ewen Southby-Tailyour tells – via interviews with key players, including the SAS officer who led the patrol – how eight men took on mission impossible.

In the high-tech world we live in today, it's hard to imagine just how primitive things were back in 1982. Due to the hazardous weather, the Plum Duff patrol was dropped not in Argentina but in Chile, over 100 miles from its objective. And to make matters worse, the men had to cope with freezing conditions, painfully inadequate kit and even worse intel. GPS and satphones had yet to be invented, while their radio struggled to raise a signal. They also had no idea that four marine battalions were guarding the airbase, or even its exact whereabouts – their best map was a relic from 1943!

Against those odds, the patrol was lucky to survive, never mind anything else, and Operation Mikado was eventually called off, its legacy shamefully glossed over by the Generals and politicians who had dreamt it up and endorsed it. Thanks to Southby-Tailyour's fine book, however, their machinations will not be forgotten. Neither, more importantly, will the heroic efforts of those men who were tasked to achieve the unachievable. **Nick Soldinger**

***Due to bad weather, the Plum Duff patrol was dropped not in Argentina but in Chile, over 100 miles from its objective***

Smoke billows from HMS Sheffield after it was hit by an Exocet missile fired by the Argentine Navy off the Falkland Islands, May 1982

TopFoto

# VIETNAM WAR HELICOPTER ART (US ARMY ROTOR AIRCRAFT): VOLUME TWO

**John Brennan** *Stackpole Military* **RRP £16**

★★★

In the theatre of combat, soldiers have been known to do all kinds of things to take their mind off the reality of their situation. Some write letters home, others play the harmonica, while still more dream of what they will do when the war is over. For the men of this book – the second volume of *Vietnam War Helicopter Art* – their fear, anxiety and boredom were alleviated somewhat by the illustrations they etched onto their aircraft.

Such was the popularity of the first book in the series that many more Vietnam War veterans came out of the woodwork and submitted photographs of their own daubings, which means that many of the pictures in Volume Two are previously unseen by the public. The illustrations – some inspired, some rudimentary – take in everything from Charlie Brown to *Easy Rider*, along with motivational slogans such as "Ho Chi Minh sucks!", providing an insight into the personalities of the pilots.

What's also interesting is how the men took ownership of their helicopters; to some, these were not merely tools of the trade but killing machines that were to be cherished and respected – or at least that's the impression their illustrative statements gave.

Obviously, the book will appeal to some people more than others: if you served in Vietnam, and especially as a helicopter pilot, you'll doubtless get the most satisfaction from the glossy pictures herein. Saying that, these are accompanied by a plethora of interesting anecdotes, facts and titbits, which will appeal to any military – and, indeed, history – enthusiast.

Author John Brennan has done an admirable job in contextualising and arranging the images into a meaningful manner. Looking at each of the machines – and, in some cases, the men grinning next to them – you're given a unique insight into what it must have been like to serve in Vietnam, and to be thrust into life-threatening tasks on a daily basis.

Some of the artwork humanises the people involved, and you can't help feeling for them being stuck in a far and distant land, away from family and friends. In other examples, however, we see the raw aggression of committed patriots who were hellbent on neutralising the enemy at any cost.

It should be noted that, while on the surface this is a book of pretty pictures, it's certainly not for children and there are some unpleasant images almost from the off. And the language in some of the pictures isn't always delicate either (as you might expect).

***What's interesting is how the men took ownership of their helicopters; to some, these were not merely tools of the trade but killing machines that were to be cherished and respected***

Like its predecessor, *Vietnam War Helicopter Art: Volume Two* is an enjoyable read and provides a valid insight into life as an American fighting the communists in a foreign land. But if you didn't serve in 'Nam or fly a chopper, you might be better off borrowing a copy from the library. **Ian Greaves**

# DOROTHEA'S WAR

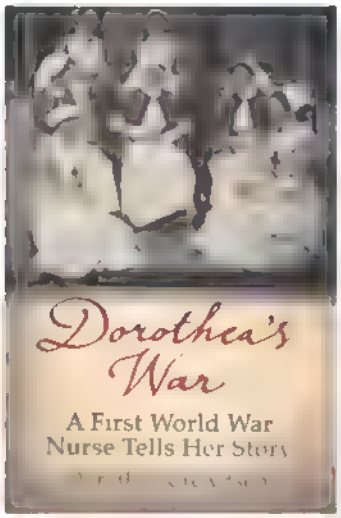
**Dorothea Crewdson** *Phoenix* **RRP £6.99**

★★★★★

There has been a fair bit of coverage on nursing during the two World Wars of late, with *The Crimson Field* debuting on TV last month, and the publishing of Kate Adie's book *Fighting On The Home Front*, an extract of which we published in issue three.

*Dorothea's War* provides the latest account of the courageous role these women played under extreme pressure and with little recognition from the British public. It's the diary of Dorothea Crewdson, who served as a Red Cross nurse on the frontline during the First World War. Awarded the Military Medal for her bravery, she sadly died of peritonitis shortly before she was due to return home. As a result, this book has been edited by her nephew, and includes a fascinating, poignant introduction from him that recalls recollections of a woman who played such a pivotal role in the nursing of wounded soldiers.

Despite the book's often harrowing subject matter, it's not a particularly heavy read because Dorothea remains so upbeat and humorous throughout, never once



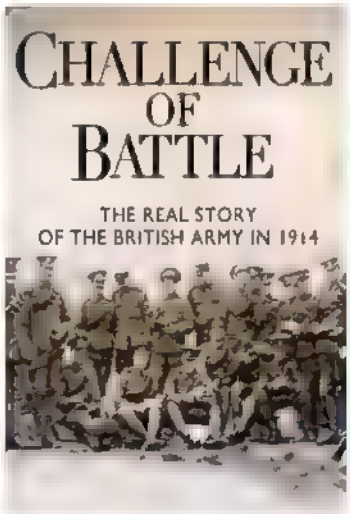

wavering or faltering in her duties. Furthermore, her various drawings offer a nice juxtaposition to her tales. All of which makes it more heartbreaking when the book comes to an abrupt end: her final entry is followed by the matron's letter to Dorothea's mother, offering her condolences on her daughter's death.

*Dorothea's War* is a heart warming insight into nursing on the frontline, without the graphic violence that so many other books tend to concentrate on. This brave nurse's story deserves to be read and applauded. **Chris Short**

# CHALLENGE OF BATTLE

**Adrian Gilbert** *Osprey Publishing* **RRP £20**

★★★★




In 1923, the Committee of Imperial Defence produced a 29-volume account of British operations in the Great War. Known simply as British Official History, its interpretation of the conflict has dominated historical accounts ever since.

In *Challenge Of Battle*, however, Adrian Gilbert declares that official version to be guilty of "deliberate prevarications", and sets out to debunk the myths – specifically those surrounding the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and the battles that wiped it out in the first few months of the war.

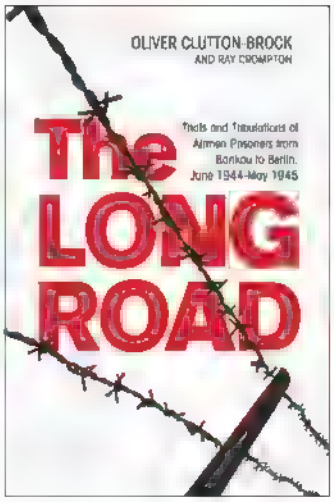
The popular view of the BEF is that it was an elite professional fighting force. Although numbering only 80,000, it's best remembered for taking on Kaiser Bill's war machine at Mons, slowing down the advance of his 750,000 men repeatedly, until stopping them just outside Paris. According to legend, the angry Kaiser dismissed them as a "contemptible little army", and its ghosts went marching off into the history books forever remembered as The Old Contemptibles.

The nickname may have stuck, but the BEF's reputation is starting to unravel. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, who had witnessed the retreat from Mons as a young officer, was first to break ranks in his 1958 memoir. Then, in 2010, came Terence Zuber's book *The Mons Myth*, which chipped away at it further. Now, through personal accounts and official documents alike, Gilbert's book finally exposes the truth behind the tactics, personality clashes and power struggles that destroyed the BEF. This brilliantly balanced book is a story of both cowardice and incompetence, courage and survival. **Nick Soldinger**

## THE LONG ROAD

**Oliver Clutton-Brock and Ray Crompton**
*Grub Street* **RRP £30**

★★★★★




Many books and films have attempted to detail what life is like in a prisoner-of-war camp (the excellent 2010 film *The Way Back* starring Colin Farrell and Ed Harris, was one of the more recent efforts, focusing on a group of prisoners' escape from a Siberian gulag and their subsequent trek to freedom). But few will come close to matching *The Long Road* for sheer, unnerving detail and nail-biting suspense. In the book, Oliver Clutton-Brock and Ray Crompton tell the story of Stalag Luft VII in Bankau, Germany (now Baków, Poland) – the Luftwaffe's last prisoner-of-war camp during the Second World War.

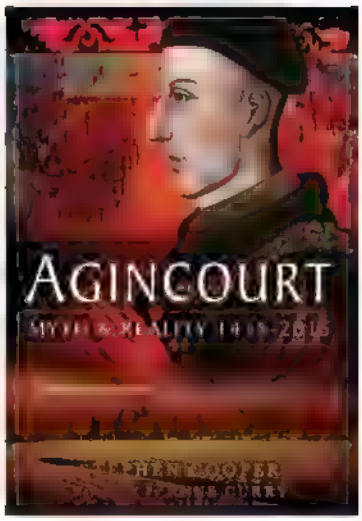
Opened on 6 June 1944 (coincidentally, the same day as the Normandy landings), Stalag Luft VII was functional for just 32 weeks before the Nazis twigged that it sat directly in the path of the Soviet offensive and decided to ship all of its inmates out. In arctic conditions, these men were forced to march to another camp near Berlin, where they were less likely to be discovered. In this book, we learn about the dire conditions endured by the 1,578 men who resided in the camp – many of them from the Royal Air Force – and their hellish journey onwards.

While the book understandably pays homage to those brave souls, it also provides a fascinating history of the camp itself, exploring its construction, maintenance, staff and eventual fate. Staggeringly, there's even a complete list of all the men who were held prisoner at the camp, which brings it home to you that these were real people and not just statistics to churn out at the end of the war. A harrowing but essential read. **James Eaves**

## AGINCOURT: MYTH AND REALITY 1415-2015

**Stephen Cooper**
*Pen & Sword Military* **RRP £19.99**

★★★★




The Battle of Agincourt has become the stuff of legend. In October 1415, midway through what would become known as the Hundred Years War, English King Henry V's exhausted and outnumbered army somehow managed to defeat the French on their own soil. Such was the impact of the triumph that it has been talked about ever since, by historians, authors, military enthusiasts and even William Shakespeare, who wrote about Agincourt in his play *Henry V*.

However, as is the case with many historical events, nobody has ever been able to agree on a universal truth, and the accounts of the battle have at times radically contradicted each other. As the title suggests, Stephen Cooper's book takes some of those opinions (including the Bard's) and dissects them, attempting to separate the fact from the fiction. It makes for a fascinating read, as you begin to understand how certain aspects of the battle were exaggerated for propaganda purposes, or – in the case of Shakespeare – simply to make them work better on the stage.

All of which means that *Agincourt: Myth And Reality 1415-2015* satisfies on many levels – as an intriguing interpretation of history and a cross-section of classical literature. With Cooper also giving a detailed synopsis of the skirmish itself (brace yourself – it's bloodthirsty at times), it's a timely reminder of one of the greatest ever military triumphs. I'm not sure why it wasn't released on the battle's 600th anniversary next year, though. **Paul Dimery**

## HOTEL FLORIDA: TRUTH, LOVE AND DEATH IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

**Amanda Vaill** *Bloomsbury* **RRP £25**

★★★★

With global conflict erupting in 1939, the Spanish Civil War that immediately preceded it (1936-39) has been largely overlooked. But at the time, the country was in a state of turmoil, with General Franco's Nationalist rebels wrestling for power with the democratically elected Republicans, and both sides committing atrocities that resonate in Spain to this day.

Caught in the crossfire were the foreign journalists sent to cover the crisis for their own national media. Their only shelter during the conflict was the Hotel Florida on Madrid's chic Gran Vía, and it was here that three couples were brought together, changing their lives forever: writer Ernest Hemingway, whose career and marriage had both stalled, and Martha Gellhorn, an ambitious journalist hungry for love and adventure; Robert Capa and Gerda Taro, two photographers who wanted to capture history in the making; and Arturo Barea, chief of the Republican government's foreign press office, and his Austrian deputy, Ilsa Kulcsar.

The story of the hotel and the part it played in shaping the destiny of the three couples is recounted in this weighty tome by bestselling and award-winning author Amanda Vaill. Breaking the story up into bitesize diary extracts, she consistently engages the reader, evoking the sun- and blood-drenched streets of 1930s Spain with amazing clarity. But the real star of the show is the story itself – an intriguing tale that will keep you guessing and leave you feeling emotionally and intellectually satisfied. **Andy Emerson**

## HARRY'S WAR

**Harry Stinton** *Conway* **RRP £9.99**

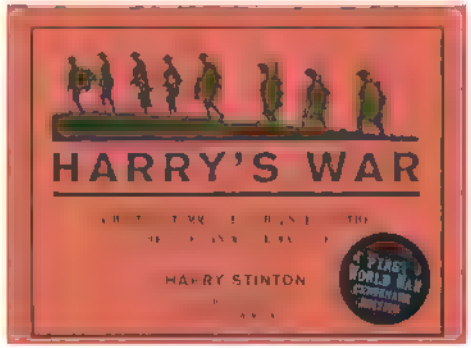
★★★★★

*Harry's War* is exactly that – the tale of what happened to British Private Harry Stinton, who was 23 years old when he volunteered for military service in 1915, told in his own words.

As a young man, Harry was a prolific writer, and a very good one at that. His accounts of nightly ordeals in the muddy and bloody trenches of the First World War, and his relationships with fellow combatants and officers, as well as his expression of his thoughts, feelings and fears, are eloquently penned. Indeed, the fact that he writes so clearly, yet with real passion, draws you further and further into his war, his mind and his predicament.

Harry fought in four different battles during the Great War, culminating in the Battle of the Somme and then Ypres, and each of the arenas in which he took part is dedicated a chapter within his book. With chilling detail, he invites the reader into the scenes he encounters, pulling no punches along the way. You really are there with Harry as he moves from battle scene to battle scene.

As well as being a writer, Harry was a talented artist, and his simplistic though revealing drawings and illustrations are peppered throughout the book's 222 pages, usually in full colour. These help to give an insight into the experiences Harry endured while fighting on the battlefields of the Western Front. What's more, this hard-backed tome is expertly edited with revealing comments and footnotes written by Virginia Mayo. A great read, and excellent value for money. **Paul Pettengale**



## I AM SOLDIER

**Dir: Ronnie Thompson** *Lionsgate* **RRP £9**

★★★

Released on the big screen earlier this year, *I Am Soldier* follows the fortunes of a military chef (played by British TV actor Tom Hughes) as he undertakes the gruelling SAS selection process. Looking at the DVD sleeve, you're led to believe that the film will follow the usual action-and-explosions recipe favoured by the majority of military-based movies. However, the genuine action is restricted to a small section at the end, and most of the film centres around the psychological aspect of training for Britain's elite forces. (Presumably, the distributors thought that dressing up the film as an action flick would get more people to watch it, believing military movie fans to be incapable of digesting something more cerebral).

Now, I'm normally up for something that engages the brain cells – there are only so many explosions and car chases you can stomach. But *I Am Soldier* left me feeling starved of true drama and suspense, not to mention a true insight into what it takes to get into the SAS (seeing as I'm not planning to try any time soon).

There is a twist of sorts, but for the most part the plot is fairly predictable and you feel like you've been here many times before (although *Private Benjamin*, it's not). Director Ronnie Thompson has cranked up the grit factor, presumably having watched the likes of *The Hurt Locker*, but without a decent script to work with he was always fighting a losing battle.

If you're looking for an action film, there are better ones out there; equally, if you want a genuine insight into the special forces, try your local library. **Steve Mavers**

## MERLINS REVENGE: THE GRAIL WARS

**Dir: Steve Barron**
*Three Wolves* **RRP £8**

★★

Ignoring the lack of apostrophe in the title, and the fact that they spelt Sam Neill wrong on the DVD cover (come on, guys, how hard can it be?), *Merlins Revenge: The Grail Wars* is a reasonably enjoyable fantasy adventure that deserves a couple of hours of your time, if only for the pretty cinematography, clever special effects, convincing/bloody battle scenes and easy-to-follow (if slightly flimsy) plot.

Neill plays the fabled sorcerer, who falls asleep with Camelot in tip-top shape, only to wake up 50 years later (as you do) to find the place in a state of turmoil: the all-important Holy Grail has gone missing and King Arthur seems to have vanished off the face of the earth. Recruiting the services of a peasant-cum-amateur magician, the wizened one sets off in search of the chalice, a quest that brings him up against the evil Lady of The lake (played with admirable menace by Miranda Richardson)

The film has its fair share of flaws: Neill's haggard beard and moustache look like something out of a Monty Python film, ancient concrete slabs come across more like papier maché, and the whole thing's got a bit of a Channel Five feel to it (which isn't surprising really, considering the film was made for TV a few years back). But to be fair, most TV dramas of this ilk are a bit throwaway (see *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, *Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.* and even the more recent version of *Merlin*). So sit back, put your feet up and enjoy this movie for what it is – or, rather, isn't. **Paul Dimery**

## TUNES OF GLORY

**Dir: Ronald Neame** *Odeon Entertainment* **RRP £9**

★★★★

Released just 15 years after the end of the Second World War, *Tunes Of Glory* is an engrossing drama starring three of the heavyweights of British cinema – Alec Guinness, John Mills and Susannah York Centred around a Scottish Highland regiment in the years after the war, it focuses on the rivalry between two men – the acting Commanding Officer of the regiment (Guinness) and the man sent to replace him (Mills). When Guinness' character launches a social and psychological campaign against the new arrival, tragedy befalls them both.

While *Tunes Of War* looks a little dated nowadays, lacking some of the sheen and sharp editing of contemporary movies, the film's themes (jealousy, loyalty, being cast aside in favour of another) – not to mention the outstanding acting of the cast – are timeless. Indeed, Guinness later stated that his performance in the film was one of the finest of his career. **Paul Dimery**

## PRIVATE PEACEFUL

**Dir: Pat O'Connor**
*Spirit Entertainment* **RRP £12**

★★★★

Some of the best films centre around rivalries within families (*The Godfather* series springs to mind). And while Pat O'Connor's adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's children's novel is never likely to be classed in the same league as Francis Ford Coppola's epics, it's a decent enough adolescent drama

*Private Peaceful* follows two brothers as they enlist for service in the First World War, leaving behind the love of their lives – the problem being, they love the same girl. The film does justice to the original story by illustrating the harsh realities of war, not just for the soldiers but also for the loved ones they leave behind. It also emphasises the injustice that many soldiers suffered when found in compromising situations.

While it's unlikely to win any awards, *Private Peaceful* is a tale that will tug at the heartstrings. The DVD comes with a host of extras, too, including a look into life in the trenches. **Chris Short**

## ALLIES IN WAR

**Android/IPhone app** *Gamelion Studios* **Free**

★★★★

OK, *Allies In War* isn't exactly what we'd call innovative – the plot follows an age-old formula (countries try to steal each other's land/resources, resulting in an inevitable fight to the death) – but where this game steals the thunder from its contemporaries is in its graphics and gameplay, both of which are reminiscent of those arcade games we used to love as kids (complete with fairly realistic explosions and slightly less realistic sound effects).

What's more, you can play the game as either a single player (great for getting in some practice) or in alliance with your friends and family, which is a surefire winner at social gatherings. There are also numerous bonuses to unlock along the way, which will keep up your interest (although it took us a while to get the hang of the game, so you'll need patience). And the best bit? It's completely free. **Geoff Dally**

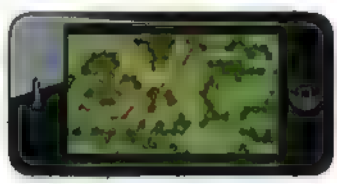
## ASSAULT: NORMANDY

**Android app** *Warbler Studio* **RRP £1.26**

★★★

If you've been inspired by the gallant endeavours of Allied forces on D-Day (6 June 1944), as detailed elsewhere in this issue, why not download this app and have a go at defeating the Wehrmacht yourself? *In Assault: Normandy*, you lead a squad of US paratroopers against the German defence in northern France, with six missions to get to grips with

To negotiate them successfully, you need to position your men in strategic areas, avoiding friendly fire and not so friendly German machine-gunners. In your own armoury, you carry rifles, semi-automatic rifles and sub-machine guns. But as with any strategy game, your most important weapon will be your brain. The reward for victory is 21 unlockable achievements – and the kudos of being able to say that you followed in the footsteps of Eisenhower and Montgomery. **Paul Dimery**

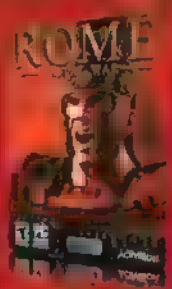


# The Ten Greatest MILITARY GAMES

Despite its horrors, the process of war can be fascinating, and you can pit your strategic nous against the computer without getting shot at. Here's our selection of the ten best strategy combat titles...

## 1 ROME: TOTAL WAR PC/Mac

*The Creative Assembly/Activision* **2004**



Following the critical acclaim for its previous strategy games *Shogun Total War* and *Medieval: Total War* – developer The Creative Assembly upped the ante for its 2004 masterpiece. You play the head of one of the three great houses during the Roman Republic, with hopes of eventually becoming Emperor. The game offers a complex meld of politics, Empire-building and tactical warfare, where encounters are played out across detailed 3D battlefields with hundreds of units. Later *Total War* games may be more visually sophisticated, but *Rome: Total War* is still regarded as the series' high point. To prolong the fun, pick up a copy of the 'Barbarian Invasion' expansion to control the Huns, Vandals and Saxons.

## 2 COMPANY OF HEROES PC/Mac

*Relic Entertainment/THQ* **2006**

Making a change from hex tiles and unit stats, *Company Of Heroes* is a real-time strategy game presented with all the cinematic grandeur of Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*. Set during the Normandy landings of the Second World War (covered in detail elsewhere in this issue, of course), the game focuses on close-quarters skirmishes between infantry and armour. With an aerial view of the battlefield, your job – in typical RTS fashion – is to build bases, gather resources and micro-manage your troops in battle. The real-time aspect means that the action is consistently fast and frantic, requiring deft control and the ability to juggle numerous elements. *Company Of Heroes* is atmospheric, suitably chaotic, and throws down a tough challenge for those up to the task.

## 3 CIVILIZATION V PC/Mac

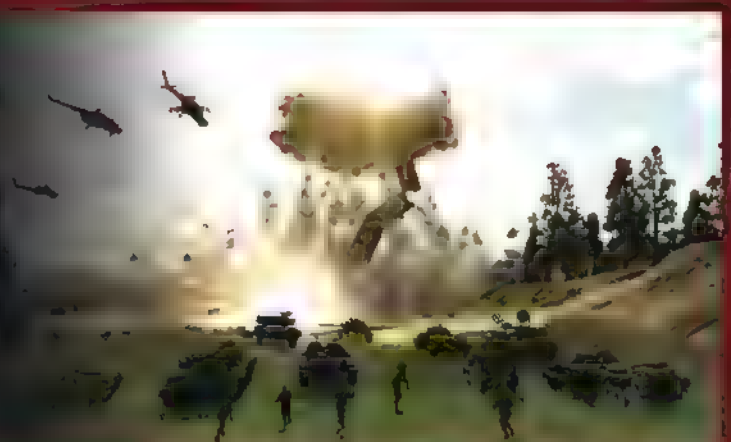
*Firaxis/2K Games/Aspyr* **2010**

The granddaddy of the turn-based strategy genre returned in 2010 after a five-year absence, with this technologically advanced and visually arresting sequel. The overall aim of Sid Meier's latest is for the player to navigate a nascent civilization through thousands of years, progressing from a primitive clan to an Empire capable of colonising another world. You're free to build your Empire as you see fit – trading, forming alliances, diplomacy, political posturing – but we all know that it eventually comes down to who's got the bigger sword/tank/army/nukes. The underlying gameplay has been bolstered with clever artificial intelligence, while the military aspect has been cranked up a notch or two. All of which means that *Civilization V* looks great and plays brilliantly – we can't wait for *Civilization VI*, due for release sometime in 2015.

## 4 WORLD IN CONFLICT PC

*Massive Entertainment/Ubisoft/Sierra Entertainment* **2007**

With its 1980s Third World War scenario, *World In Conflict* pits the player's United States and NATO forces against a belligerent Russia. But it dispenses with the resource-gathering and production aspect of real-time strategy games, in favour of a set amount of reinforcement points, which the player uses at the start of the campaign. For this reason, the focus of the game is more on tactical deployment and coping with the changing battlefield than the overall grand strategy. Developed by Swedish company Massive Entertainment, *World In Conflict* is an interesting take on the genre and delivers cerebral gameplay mixed with explosive action, requiring an organised mind and quick reflexes.



## 5 CRUSADER KINGS II PC/Mac

*Paradox Development Studio/Paradox Interactive* **2012**

This tale of manipulation, diplomacy, bribery and backstabbing in medieval Europe is perhaps on the periphery of our selection, but it's certainly good enough to be included. And after all, actual combat is surely only one facet of the strategist's arsenal. Faced with a patchwork of feudal states that spread from Britain to the Middle East, your job is simply to expand your territory and influence as you see fit. With its painstaking historical accuracy – characters include everyone from William the Conqueror to Alfred the Great, Robert Guiscard to Harold Godwinson, *Crusader Kings II* is largely a game of personal relationships and political intrigue; and while combat is a somewhat abstracted affair, there's still plenty of strategy to be had.

## 6 COMMAND OPS: BATTLES FROM THE BULGE PC

*Panther Games/Matrix Games* **2010**

Australian developer Panther Games is well-known for its detailed, tabletop-style war-strategy games, which tend to eschew fancy 3D graphics in favour of simulating the decision processes of military command. *Command Ops*' real-time game engine provides you with intelligence and lets you micro-manage your forces' next moves; alternatively, you can make broader decisions and let the AI take care of individual units. If you're serious about military strategy and don't mind the lack of whizz-bang visuals, *Command Ops: Battles From The Bulge* and its two expansion packs, *Highway To The Reich* and *Conquest Of The Aegean*, are well worth checking out.

## 7 WARGAME: AIRLAND BATTLE PC/Mac

*Eugen Systems/Focus Home Interactive* **2013**

Based on an alternate reality in 1985, this Third World War strategy game sees the forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact do battle across Europe, and lets you play as either side. You guide overall events using a world map, where you can order reconnaissance and covert operations, and even call in nuclear strikes. Then, when opposing forces meet, the view switches to near ground level, where you take control of the combat. With its vast scope, detailed graphics and over 800 units to command, this is tactical warfare on an impressive scale.

## 8 HEARTS OF IRON III PC/Mac

*Paradox Development Studio/Paradox Interactive* **2009**

Most strategy games are complicated beasts that require plenty of time and attention, but *Hearts Of Iron III* takes this to another level entirely. Designed for hardcore strategists, the game begins in 1936 and takes you through the entirety of the Second World War – in fact, it's more of a simulation than a game. You can choose to lead any nation involved in the hostilities, and you're given control over almost every aspect, from balancing production and trade to organising your military, via research, espionage and theatre strategy. *Hearts Of Iron III* and its expansions are very deep, and you can get lost in single campaigns for days. This is war gaming at its most extreme.

## 9 BLITZKRIEG PC/Mac

*Nival Interactive/CDV* **2003**

Russian developer Nival Interactive's *Blitzkrieg* series first emerged in 2003 with this isometric-perspective, real-time tactics game, and has since seen all manner of add-ons and expansions. The original title pitches the Soviet, German and Allied armies against each other in 20 historical battles from the Second World War, as well as some secondary skirmishes – taking in both the European and African theatres. There's even some archive footage from the period thrown in to beef up the whole gaming experience. *Blitzkrieg*'s small-scale encounters have limited forces, so rely on the players' tactical skill to achieve victory. Meanwhile, there are no buildings for troop generation, and reinforcements are also in short supply. The gameplay is a little slow-paced compared to newer strategy titles, but if the old-school graphics put you off, look out for *Blitzkrieg 3*, due out later this year.

## 10 AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS PC/Mac

*Ensemble Studios/Hidden Path Entertainment/Microsoft* **2013**

The original *Age Of Empires II: The Age Of Kings* first came out way back in 1999, but the classic real-time strategy game was re-released last year with updated graphics. As an introduction to the world of RTS, this is an excellent place to start: it's fun, accessible and doesn't take things too seriously. But that's not to say that this game of Empire-building in medieval times is a walk in the park. The competing civilizations will happily destroy your burgeoning realm if you let your guard down, so you have to construct towns, expand your kingdom and build an army capable of exerting your influence across the land.

# WAR in NUMBERS

# THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR

Calculating the 1337-1453 conflict between **the French and the English**

**116**

▲ The number of years that the conflict actually lasted. Historians have called it the Hundred Years War since the start of the 19th Century.

**5**

▲ The number of Kings who reigned in England during the war: Edward III, Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI.

**1**

▲ All of the battles of the Hundred Years War were fought in one country: France.

**1**

▲ One battle was immortalised in Shakespeare's play *Henry V*: the Battle of Agincourt (1415).

**12**

◀ English archers were highly skilled and could fire 12 arrows a minute with great accuracy.

**3**

▶ There were three phases of the conflict: the Edwardian Era War (1337-60), the Caroline War (1369-89) and the Lancastrian War (1415-53).

**3,000,000**

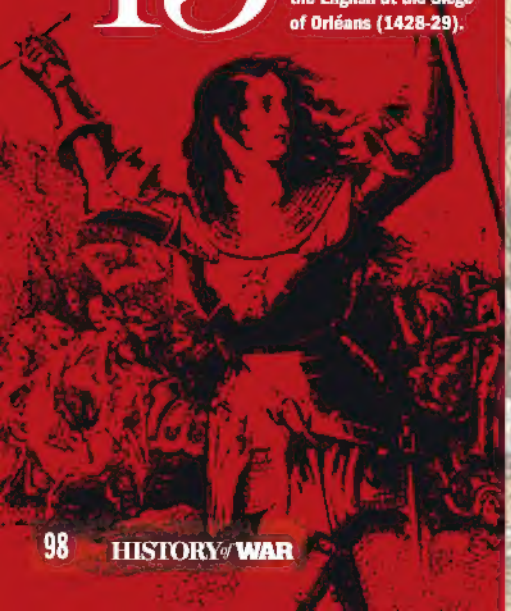
▲ The estimated number of deaths (on both sides) that came about as a result of the war – this includes victims of the Plague.

**4**

▲ Wages for English soldiers were set at four shillings per day for knights and two pence for regular infantry.

**13**

◀ The age of Joan of Arc when she began her successful mission to liberate France from the English at the Siege of Orléans (1428-29).



**17,000,000**

▲ France's population at the beginning of the war. The population of England was around four million.

**56**

The number of major battles fought. The last of these was the Battle of Castillon in 1453, which resulted in victory for the French.

**45-50%**

▲ The percentage of England's population killed off by the Plague during the war (over two periods – 1348-49 and 1361-62)

Mary Evans

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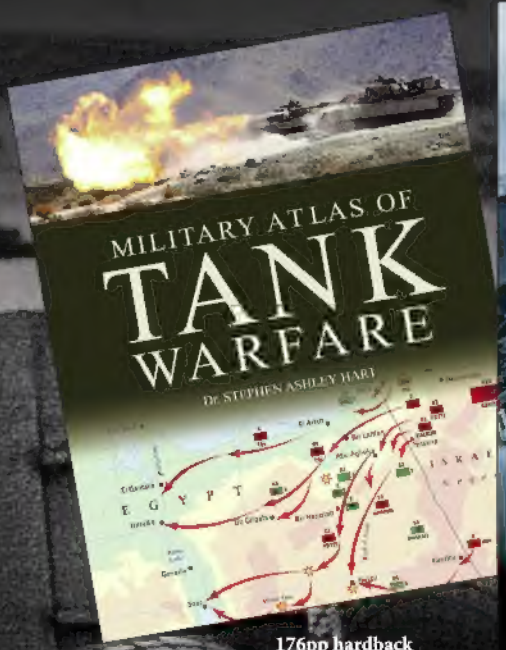


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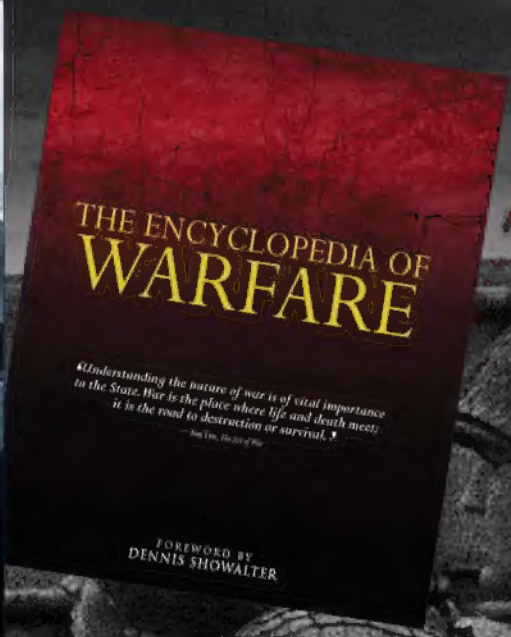


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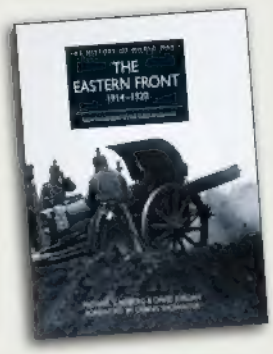


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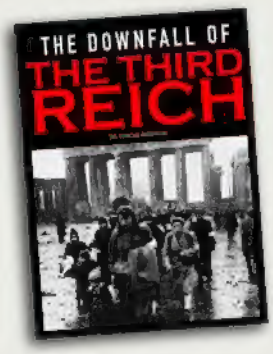


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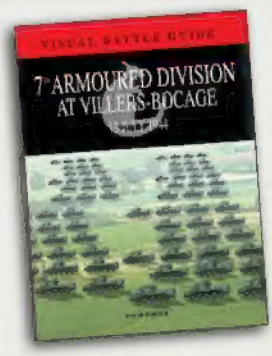


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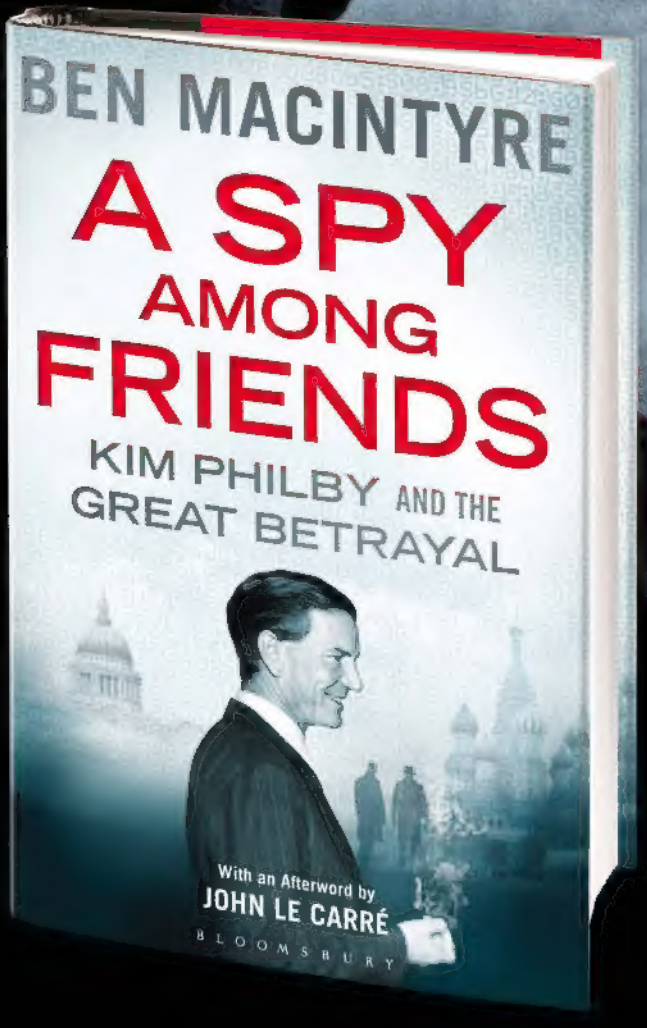


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